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Great Patriotic War: Unknown Won

Yev Popukhovskiy  
Borie Kavalerchik

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programmed defeat

Moscow  
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"EKSMO"  
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The military catastrophe of 1941 was so monstrous, the defeat of the Red Army was so unexpected,  
and the losses were so great that this wound in the people's memory has not healed to this day - fierce

disputes about the causes and perpetrators of the tragedy. And the main question: could it have been avoided? Was there a real alternative to the Great Patriotic War?

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In their new book, leading military historians convincingly argue that there was no such alternative. The tragedy of 1941 was inevitable and programmed, due to objective reasons - the nature of the state system of the USSR, the state of its economy, the standard of living and education of the population, the system for making the most important decisions, the real state of combat and mobilization readiness of the Red Army.

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Dedicated to  
the soldiers and officers of the 41st year,  
who died in the name of Victory

June 22, 1941 - Day of Memory and Sorrow (instead of  
the prologue)

On this day, at 4 o'clock in the morning, the Soviet Union was subjected to a sudden and unprovoked massive fall of German troops deployed in advance and concentrated near the Soviet border. Bombs of enemy aircraft hit the border airfields and cities. Its main efforts were aimed at gaining air supremacy. The first strike, in which 637 bombers and 231 Luftwaffe fighters took part, was carried out against Soviet frontier airfields that had been explored in advance. The raid was carried out by the most trained crews, who took off in complete darkness and crossed the border at high altitude, starting at 0300 (0400 Moscow time)<sup>1</sup>. At dawn, before the Soviet fighters could take off, 31 airfields were bombed. After additional reconnaissance of the planned objects, 400 bombers attacked another 35 airfields located in the depths. Repeated raids and attacks on 66 Soviet airfields, where 70% of the planes of the border districts were located, continued throughout the day [1]. The main blow was inflicted on the aviation of the Western (26 airfields) and Kyiv (23) military districts. As a result, on the very first day of the war, the enemy managed to destroy, according to German data, 1,811 Soviet aircraft, of which 1,489 were on the ground and 322 in air battles. Of the 1,765 bombers and 506 fighters participating in the raids, the enemy lost only 35 aircraft [2].

<sup>1</sup> From 04/01/40 to 11/2/42, the troops of the Third Reich acted according to

him Central European (Berlin) time, which differed from the world by 2 hours, and from Moscow - by one.

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Soviet airfield after a German air raid

According to our official data, on June 22, aviation near the border districts lost 1,200 aircraft, of which 800 at airfields. The Western Front lost 738 aircraft on the first day, most of them on the ground. One of the reasons for the large losses of the Air Force was the lack of initiative and ineffectiveness of the command of the Air Force of the military districts. Despite the repeated demands of the People's Commissar of Defense, including his last order of 06/19/1941, aviation in all border military districts, except Odessa, was not dispersed and continued to be based on permanent airfields, well known and studied by the enemy. In the OdVO, the enemy destroyed 45–50 aircraft [3]. But it must be borne in mind that it was mainly Romanian aviation that fought against it, which was significantly inferior in combat capability to the German one.

Thus, the Germans managed to win air supremacy on the very first day, which provided the German troops with a huge advantage in the course of hostilities on earth. The destruction of a significant number of our

' A more detailed study showed that these losses were not only the result of enemy air strikes. Many planes were left for various reasons at the airfields in connection with the rapid advance of enemy ground forces.

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consumers allowed the Germans to use their unaccompanied bombers in the future, and their fighters - to perform independent tasks. On the first day of the war, German aviation hit targets and objects at a depth of 300-400 km.

It should be noted that the actions of formations of all types and branches of the German armed forces in the invasion operation were carefully planned to the minute in order to achieve maximum results on the very first day. The duration of daylight hours on this day is the largest, the same as on June 21, the day of the summer solstice. For example, at the latitude of Brest, the full daylight hours on June 22 lasted more than 18 hours. At the latitude of the city of Rava-Russkaya (in the offensive zone of the 1st Panzer Group), dawn began at 3.30 Berlin time, at the latitude of Brest - at 3.15, and to the north - at the latitude of Suwalki even earlier - at 3.00. In this regard, ver-

The Wehrmacht High Command (OKW) postponed the previously scheduled time for the start of the invasion from 3.30 to 3.00.

The commanders of the German armies and tank groups, depending on the weather conditions and the situation in the offensive zone, themselves determined the time for the start and duration of artillery preparation, as well as the time for crossing the border, but not earlier than 3.00 Berlin time. Everything depended on the time of the onset of the so-called "artillery dawn", at which it was possible to observe the results of artillery fire. And it depended on the latitude of the place. For example, at the latitude of Brest on June 22, 1941, the time of sunrise was 04.04, but dawn came 49 minutes earlier. Therefore, the commander of the 2nd Panzer Group, Guderian, timed the beginning of the artillery preparation to the time of the air strikes - at 03.15 (at 04.15). In areas where artillery preparation was not carried out, the Germans went on the offensive after short fire raids. So, in the strip of the North-Western Front near Raseiniai, the Germans, in order to achieve surprise, began crossing the border at exactly 03.00. The 1st TD crossed the border at 03.05. At the same time, her attack was supported by a volley of batteries of 6-barreled rocket launchers. A German participant in these events later admitted that they "have never heard of such a thing before and therefore were just as frightened by it as the enemy!"

Thus, a surprise attack on the Soviet Union on June 22 was carried out by the Germans in the period from 3.00 to 3.30 (from 4.00 to 4.30 Moscow time). The tragedy of that Sunday, which instantly turned the lives of Soviet people upside down, can be imagined from the events in the region of Brest, the only large city located near the border. Here, on the direction of Brest-Minsk-Smolensk, the enemy dealt the main blow with the forces of the most powerful Army Group Center. The most intense artillery fire was opened by the Germans on military camps in Brest and on the Brest Fortress itself. The citadel (the central part of the fortress) was literally bombarded with rows and mines. In addition to the artillery of the 45th Infantry Division, which was advancing on Brest, and other formations, nine light and three heavy separate batteries attached to the 2nd Panzer Group of Guderian, three divisions of 210-mm mortars and a battery of special power (two 600-mm mortars "Karl"). The fire was fired at the circular barracks in the central part of the fortress, along the bridges and entrance gates, and at the houses of the command staff. To correct the fire in the offensive area of the group, the Germans raised several observation air stations.

A sudden artillery attack caused confusion among the personnel stationed in the fortress. In addition, many commanders who survived the raid were unable to penetrate the barracks due to heavy barrage fire. As a result, the Red Army soldiers and junior commanders, in groups and singly, tried to get out of the fortress on their own. But they could not get to the usual place of gathering on alarm, since the Germans, knowing about it (they established it during numerous training alarms of the Russians), conducted concentrated fire on this area. In the very first hours of the battle, the Germans managed to capture many

fighters and commanders who escaped from the fortress. Recently, newsreel footage has become widely known, showing how the Germans are driving captured half-dressed soldiers and commanders along the railway bridge to the other side of the Bug. Some commanders nevertheless managed to get to their units and subunits, but they could not withdraw them and remained in the fortress themselves. Losses in people, weapons and military equipment were very large. Most of the guns and vehicles that were in open artillery

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Russian parks, was destroyed. Almost all the horses of the artillery and mortar units perished at their hitching posts. A similar picture of a surprise attack developed in other sectors of the Soviet-German border. Therefore, it makes no sense to retell everything that happened at dawn on June 22: this is done in hundreds of memoirs and articles of direct participants who survived the outbreak of war.

It was not for nothing that the Germans scheduled the invasion for Sunday, June 22. This was done with the expectation of taking our troops by surprise precisely on a day off. The day before, June 21, the signal signal "Dortmund" was received in the formations of the Wehrmacht on the Eastern Front. From that moment on, the German troops began to openly carry out the previously issued orders for the implementation of Operation Barbarossa. No one could stop Hitler's running war machine. Panzer divisions of the Wehrmacht on Sunday night began advancing to the border to occupy the starting position for the offensive. To the surprise of the Nazi generals, everything indicated that the Russians were unaware of the impending attack. The chief of staff of the German 4th Field Army, General Blumentritt, later recalled:

"As we expected, by the evening of June 21, the Russians should have understood what was happening, but on the other side of the Bug, in front of the front of the 4th Army and the 2nd Panzer Group, that is, between Brest and Lomza, everything was quiet. The Russian border guards behaved as usual. Shortly after midnight, the international train Moscow-Berlin proceeded without hindrance through Brest <...>" [4].

Guderian echoes him:

"Careful observation of the Russians on June 21 convinced me that they suspect nothing of our intentions. In the courtyard of the fortress of Brest, which was visible from our observation posts, guards were raised to the sounds of an orchestra. The coastal fortifications along the Western Bug were not occupied by Russian troops <...> The prospects for maintaining the moment of surprise were so great that the question arose whether, under such circumstances, artillery preparation should be carried out for an hour, as provided for by the order. Only out of caution, in order to avoid unnecessary losses as a result of unexpected

given the actions of the Russians at the time of crossing the river, I ordered artillery preparation to be carried out within the prescribed time "[5].

What's the matter, why were our troops taken by surprise? Why were they not ready to repulse a sudden German attack? How did the Germans manage to covertly prepare and carry out such a large-scale surprise invasion of the territory of the Soviet Union? What did Soviet intelligence do? What was the command of the border districts thinking about? Didn't they have data on the preparation of the Germans for the attack? Questions, questions to which there are still no clear and unambiguous answers. Let's try to go back a little.

The situation in the border areas by mid-June became especially alarming. Holidays were canceled for the command staff. Local residents, who had fairly strong ties with their relatives on the other side of the insufficiently equipped Soviet-German border, said directly that the war would soon begin and the "German" would come here. They stocked up on food and basic necessities, trying to sell Soviet money. In order not to raise a panic, the command forbade sending the families of commanders into the depths of the country.'

On Saturday evening, June 21, the soldiers and commanders of the Red Army finally got the opportunity to rest after a week of hard work. Everyone hoped that at least this Sunday there would be no training alarms. The behavior of the command staff of the Western Special Military District is striking. There, all of a sudden became inveterate theater-goers. One gets the impression that the senior commanders of the district were instructed to demonstrate in every possible way unshakable calmness, confidence and peacefulness in the spirit of the TASS report of June 13, 1941. For example, many commanders and political workers from among the command of the 4th Army decided to take advantage of the arrival of Moscow stage artists to Brest and visit the theater. The commander of the army, General A.A. Korobkov with his boss

' Subsequently, the commander's families living in areas immediately adjacent to the border did not have time to evacuate, and they mostly died.

headquarters Colonel Sandalov. In Minsk, where the headquarters of the military district was located, the commander of the troops of the district, Colonel-General D.G. Pavlov and his deputy, Lieutenant General I.V. Boldin that evening also went to the Garrison Officers' House for the comedy Wedding in Malinovka.

According to the memoirs of I.V. Boldin, during the performance, the head of the intelligence department of the district headquarters, Colonel S.V. Blokhin reported to Pavlov about the alarming situation on the border, that the German troops had allegedly been brought to full combat readiness and had even begun shelling individual sections of our borders. Nevertheless, both leaders still finished watching the comedy [6]. How can this be explained: enviable calmness or criminal carelessness? Indeed, in the information of the intelligence department of the district headquarters of June 5, 1941, it was indicated that "about 40 German divisions were concentrated on the border of Belarus, including 24 divisions in the Brest direction" [7]. Most likely, Pavlov decided not to leave his box, so as not to cause concern among the audience, most of whom were commanders and their families. Later, the already arrested General of the Army D.G. Pavlov, at a closed court session of the Military Collegium of the Supreme Court of the USSR on July 22, 1941, will declare:

"I knew that the enemy was about to move out, but from Moscow they assured me that everything was in order, and I was ordered to be calm and not panic. I can't name the person who told me this" [8]. But this time, for some reason, the investigators did not seek the name of the person Pavlov referred to. Usually this person (I. Stalin) in the protocols of interrogations of numerous "traitors" and "enemies of the people" was called - "instance".

The directive of the People's Commissar of Defense about a possible sudden attack by the Germans during June 22-23, 1941 was received at the district headquarters at 1.45 on June 22. Immediately after deciphering, the district headquarters from 2.25 began to transfer its contents to the armies for immediate execution. However, from about 2 am (two hours before the invasion) on the territory of the Western Military District of Ga, a massive failure of wire communication lines began. It was enemy agents from local opponents of the Soviet government and its sabotage groups, which were previously abandoned in our rear. They knocked out almost

eleven

all wire communications between the armies and the troops and district headquarters. For example, due to the loss of communication, the headquarters of the 4th Army could not immediately accept the directive, and when it did, it had to be deciphered already under enemy bombs. After the restoration of communication with Minsk at 3.30 am, the commander of the troops of the district by telegraph (BODO) in plain text informed its commander, General A.A. Korobkov that a provocative raid by Nazi troops on our territory is expected that night. At the same time, he categorically warned that our troops should not succumb to a provocation. Pavlov did not allow the commander to raise one division on alert, although he had the right to do so. To the question of Korobkov, what kind of events are allowed to be carried out, Pavlov replied: "Bring all parts of the army to combat readiness. Slowly begin to move the 42nd Division to occupy prepared positions. Parts of the Brest fortified area

covertly occupy pillboxes. Relocate regiments of the air division to field airfields" [9].

The latter should have been done earlier. The warning about the possibility of a sudden German attack came too late. The commanders of formations subjected to shelling and bombing independently began to raise units on combat alert. At the same time, the formations located in the immediate vicinity of the state border suffered the greatest losses. From 4 o'clock in the morning the headquarters of the district began to receive reports from the armies about the bombing and shelling. From the 3rd Army it was reported that the Germans had violated the border in the sector from Sopotskin to Avgustov, they were bombing Grodno, the headquarters of the army. Communication with the units by wire was broken, all telegraph and telephone poles were knocked down for fifty kilometers. They switched to radio, but two of the three headquarters radio stations stopped working, possibly were destroyed.

Boldin recalls:

<...> In a short time, for the fourth time, he calls the people's commissar of defense. I present new information. After listening to me, S.K. Timoshenko says:

- Comrade Boldin, please note that no action against the Germans is to be taken without our knowledge. I inform you and ask you to tell Pavlov that Comrade Stalin does not allow artillery fire on the Germans.

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- How so? I scream into the phone. "After all, our troops are forced to retreat. Cities are burning, people are dying! <...>

"Reconnaissance by aircraft should be carried out no further than sixty kilometers," says the people's commissar [10].

So much has been written about June 22 and the days before that, it would seem, everything should already be clear. But when comparing information from available sources, a lot of puzzling questions involuntarily arise, the answers to which you will not immediately find. A lot of information was received about the scale of the concentration of German troops near the Soviet border. So, on June 1, the Soviet command had data on the concentration of 120-122 Wehrmacht divisions against the USSR, as well as 13 divisions and 3 brigades of Romania [11]. From the second half of June, alarming reports began to arrive from various sources on all channels, which spoke of an imminent German attack in the very next few days. And what did the political and military leadership of the country and the army do in the last days and hours before the start of the war, having such information?

GK. Zhukov writes in his famous memoirs:

"On the evening of June 21, I received a phone call from the Chief of Staff of the Kiev Military District, Lieutenant General M.A. Purkaev and reported that a defector had come to the border guards - a German



cue sergeant-major, who claims that the German troops are leaving for the starting areas for an offensive that will begin on the morning of June 22.

I immediately reported to the Commissar and I.V. Stalin what M.A. Purkaev conveyed.

"Come with the people's commissar to the Kremlin," said I.V. Sta LIN.

Having taken with him a draft directive to the troops, together with the People's Commissar and Lieutenant General N.F. Vatutin, we went to the Kremlin. On the way, we agreed at all costs to achieve a decision to put the troops on combat readiness.

I.V. Stalin met us alone. He was clearly concerned.

"But didn't the German generals plant this defector in order to provoke a conflict?" - he asked.

- No, - answered S.K. Timoshenko. We believe that the defector is telling the truth.

Meanwhile, in the office of I.V. Stalin included members of the Politburo. Stalin briefly briefed them.

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- What do we do? asked I.V. Stalin.

There was no answer.

"It is necessary to immediately give a directive to the troops on bringing all the troops of the border districts into full combat readiness (hereinafter it is highlighted by us. - Auth.), - said the people's commissar.

— Read! - said I.V. Stalin.

I have read the draft directive. I.V. Stalin remarked:

"It is premature to give such a directive now, perhaps the issue will be settled peacefully. It is necessary to give a short directive in which it is indicated that the attack may begin with provocative actions of the German units. The troops of the border districts should not succumb to any provocations, so as not to cause complications.

Wasting no time, N.F. and I Vatutin went into another room and quickly drafted a directive from the people's commissar. Returning to the office, they asked permission to report. I.V. Stalin, after listening to the draft directive and reading it again himself, made some amendments and handed it over to the people's commissar for signature.

<...> With this directive, N.F. Vatutin immediately went to the General Staff in order to immediately transfer it to the districts. The transfer to the districts was completed at 00.30 on June 22, 1941. A copy of the directive was handed over to the Commissar of the Military

Marine Fleet.

What came of this belated order, we shall see later.

Experiencing a feeling of some kind of complex duality, S.K. and I returned. Timoshenko from I.V. Stalin.

<...> German troops may go on the offensive tomorrow, while in our country a number of important measures have not yet been completed. And this can seriously complicate the fight against an experienced and strong enemy. The directive, which at that moment was transmitted by the General Staff to the districts, could be late and not even reach those who tomorrow morning should meet face to face with the enemy" [12].

So, according to Zhukov, the notorious directive to the troops of the border districts was born, which historians later assigned the number |.

' This phrase was removed from the text of the first editions of the memoirs. On the question of what it meant and why it was removed still has no clear answer.

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Chief of the General Staff G.K. Zhukov and People's Commissar of Defense S.K. Timoshenko (1941)

We apologize to the reader for the too lengthy excerpt from Zhukov's memoirs, but we need it in order to identify some contradictions in the marshal's memoirs and in the very text of the directive, the meaning and circumstances of the adoption of which researchers have been arguing for several decades.

Here is her text:

"To the military councils of the LVO, PribOVO, ZapOVO, KOVO, OdVO.

Copy: People's Commissar of the Navy.

1. During June 22-23, 1941, a sudden German attack is possible on the fronts of the LVO, PribOVO, ZapOVO, KOVO, OOVO. On the fall may begin with provocative actions.

2. The task of our troops is not to succumb to any provocative actions that could cause major complications. At the same time, the troops of the Leningrad, Baltic, Western, Kiev and Odessa military districts should be in full combat readiness (hereinafter it is emphasized by us. - Auth.) to meet a possible surprise attack by the Germans or their allies.

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3. I order:

a) during the night on 22.6.41. covertly occupy firing points of fortified areas on the state border;

6) before dawn on June 22, 1941, disperse all aviation, including military aviation, over field airfields, carefully disguise it;

c) put all units on combat readiness. Troops to keep dispersed and camouflaged;

d) put the air defense on alert without additional lifting of the assigned staff. Prepare all measures to darken cities and objects;

e) no other activities are to be carried out without special instructions.

21.6.41" [13].  
Timoshenko.  
Zhukov.

It is strange that Zhukov, speaking about this episode, nowhere mentions the time when he received the news about the defector and when he and Timoshenko came to Stalin. This is an important question, because at that time the count was no longer hours, but minutes. Judging by the "Journal of Visits" to Stalin's office on the evening of June 21, Timoshenko and Zhukov entered Stalin's office at 20.50. Four more people were already there: Politburo members Molotov, Beria, Malenkov and Voroshilov. Five minutes later, Mekhlis [14] entered the same place. Tymoshenko and Zhukov left the office at 22.20.

But for some reason, they began to transmit the directive to the troops only at 0.25 on June 22. The delay with the transfer was more than two hours (Vatutin left before 22.20). Therefore, it was not possible to bring it to most of the compounds in a timely manner. For example, at the headquarters of the 4th Army, they began to decipher the directive already under enemy bombs. If the troops had been warned of a possible surprise attack by the Germans earlier, they would have been able to fight in an organized manner, and there would have been much fewer victims of a surprise attack.

A natural question arises: what prevented the troops from being given the set signal (ciphered telegram) to put them on combat readiness? It would take

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the minimum time is on average no more than 30 minutes. Why didn't they use the circular method of notifying

Means from the center - all at once, up to and including the division? Instead, they began to hand over to the troops a document listing what SHOULD and CAN be done in accordance with the directive, with a significant indication that NO other activities should be carried out without a special order. What caused it? And what measures did Timoshenko and Zhukov propose in response to the obvious threat of a fall by the Germans, which Stalin called premature? Why did Stalin disagree with the military and why was he so afraid of provoking the Germans? The very text of the directive is also contradictory: the troops of the districts should be in full combat readiness and, at the same time, the units should be put on combat readiness. You can continue to ask questions about this indefinitely. In his memoirs, Zhukov did not give answers to these questions, and could not give them for obvious reasons. At the time of their first publication, many things were hidden from the public in the bins of the Soviet archives. And even now, much is still hidden for us by a thick veil of secrecy.

We reserve the right to return to these questions in order to answer them on the basis of an analysis of documents relating to the protection of the state border. In the meantime, we note that in the memoirs of the marshal, in our opinion, one can clearly see the desire to once again emphasize that Stalin did not allow him and the people's commissar to fully prepare the troops to repel a possible enemy attack, and thereby relieve himself of responsibility for their unpreparedness .

Memoirs are unreliable. This can be judged at least by the following error, which was missed in the Marshal's book by numerous editors and consultants. He writes (now giving the time to the nearest minute):

"At 03:30, the Chief of Staff of the Western District, General V.E. Klimovskikh reported on the German air raid on the cities of Belarus. Three minutes later, the chief of staff of the Kyiv district reported on an air raid on the cities of Ukraine by the INS <...>" [15].

' To decrypt the directive, then encrypt and retransmit

it took a total of at least 4-5 hours to provide its maintenance in each instance, up to and including the division.

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Zhukov's statement contradicts the documents, including the data of the first operational report of our General Staff at 10.00 on June 22, 1941:

"<...> at 4.00 the Germans, without any reason, raided our airfields and cities and crossed the border with ground troops.

<...> in the NWF at 4.00 artillery fire was opened and at the same time

bombed airfields and cities <...>

<...> in the ZapF at 4.20 they began to bomb the cities of Grodno and Brest and at the same time opened artillery fire<...> |

<...> in the South-Western Front, from 4.30 a.m., the bombing of the cities of Kovel and Lutsk began <...>

At 04:35, ground troops crossed the border and began to advance in the direction of Vladimir-Volynsky" [16].

We do not want to say that G.K. Zhukov did not know when the war began. Apparently, the shift in time by one hour forward in his memoirs occurred in connection with the report at 3.17 of the commander of the Black Sea Fleet, Admiral F.S. Oktyabrsky Zhukov about the approach from the sea to the base of the fleet in Sevasto, the field of a large number of unknown aircraft. Indeed, an hour before the appointed time of the invasion, the Germans tried to block the ships in the Northern Bay by dropping non-contact mines? Anti-aircraft fire prevented the Germans from carrying out mine laying. Two mines dropped by parachute exploded in the city.

Unfortunately, in the memoirs of other Soviet military leaders there are many similar accidental and sometimes deliberate inconsistencies with the facts. They did not expect that the Soviet archives would ever reveal their secrets to the general public.

But back to the events at the front. Only at about 6 o'clock on June 22 at the headquarters of the Western Front did they receive a telegram, on which the departure time was stamped - 5.25:

"In view of the mass military operations that have been identified by the Germans, I order to raise troops and act in a combat manner" [17].

'  
In the second, supplemented edition of 1974 of the famous memoirs of the marshal, on page 265 another, exact time is already indicated - 03.07.

? \* 9 He 111 aircraft from the 4th bomber squadron of the 4th air corps participated in the raid. (Khazanov D.B. op. op. P. 110.)

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The order was duplicated by the armies. Only then did they give a signal to put into effect plans to cover the state border and open the notorious "red packets", on the topic of which the notorious Rezun speculated more than once. The commanders and division commanders in the first hours tried to act according to plans, although they no longer corresponded to the prevailing situation. However, attempts to refine the tasks due to the lack of communication were not successful. To destroy telephone and telegraph communication lines, the enemy, in addition to sabotage groups, allocated special aircraft. Already

on the first day of hostilities, the headquarters of the Western Front lost contact with the 3rd and 10th armies. On the second day of the war, telegraph and wire communications between the headquarters of the Northwestern Front and the headquarters of the 8th and 11th armies were interrupted. Troop control was broken. Nevertheless, after some confusion, the Red Army put up fierce resistance to the enemy.

Formations and units, with rare exceptions, did not have time to take prepared field positions and reinforce the garrisons of the fortified area near the border. They entered into battle with superior enemy forces in extremely unfavorable conditions for themselves, on unequipped terrain without proper artillery support and cover from air strikes. Attempts to repel the attacks of superior enemy forces with fire from unprepared lines were not successful.

This is how the party leadership of the Brest region assessed the current situation. Excerpts from a letter (the document is stamped "Soviet secret. Special folder") from the secretary of the regional committee of the CP(b)B M.N. Tupitsyn dated June 25, 1941, addressed to the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks, Comrade Stalin and the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Belarus, Comrade Ponomarenko:

"Obkom CP(b)B believes that the leadership of the 4th Army turned out to be unprepared to organize and direct military operations <...>

V.B. Rezun, a former Soviet military intelligence officer who worked

in the office of the military attaché in Switzerland, he defected to the West in 1978. This traitor did not hesitate to assign himself the pseudonym "Suvorov". He claimed that the order to open the "red packages" was never given and never was.

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The invasion of German troops into our territory happened so easily because not a single unit and formation was ready to accept battle, therefore they were forced to either retreat in disorder or perish. The 42nd line of the division in Brest and the 49th rifle division found themselves in this position. in the Vysokovskiy district.

In the Brest Fortress, on the very border, two divisions were kept, which, even in peacetime conditions, took a long time to leave this fortress and deploy for military operations. In addition, despite the signal of military danger, the command staff lived in the city in apartments. Naturally, at the first shots, panic was created among the Red Army, and a powerful flurry of German artillery fire quickly destroyed both divisions <...>

A separate [120th] regiment of the ARGC was located in the Kossovsky district. June 22, when the regional leadership moved

there, we found this regiment in such a state: the materiel was in the town of Kossovo, the soldiers were in camps near Baranovichi (150 km from Kossovo), and there was no ammunition. To take out the materiel from Kossovo, the regiment commander did not have enough drivers and tractor drivers. The Regional Committee of the KISb)B helped to mobilize these personnel on the spot in civil organizations. But by the time they managed to transfer some of the guns, it was already too late - they were destroyed by bombs, and, in fact, all the valuable guns remained with the Germans ?.

A lot of ammunition and weapons perished in warehouses on Bronnaya Gora (Berezovsky district), and there were not enough ammunition and weapons in the military units.

<...> the command of the 4th Army <...> did not prepare for military operations. As a result of this state, from the very first day of hostilities, panic began in the units of the 4th Army. Caught by the surprise attack, the commanders were at a loss. It was possible to observe such a picture when thousands of commanders (starting from majors and chiefs and ending with junior commanders) and fighters took to flight. The dangerous thing is that this panic and de-

'  
An obvious exaggeration: from Kossovo to the training ground in a straight line about 60 km, on the road through Ivatsevichi 80-85 km.

? The 120th GAP BM RGK in full force was in the camp at the Obuz-Lesna training ground southwest of Baranovichi. In the warehouse "NZ" in Kossovo there were 12 B-4 howitzers for the 612th GAP BM RGK, formed with the announcement of mobilization. At st. Kossovo-Polesskoe there were 6 more such guns, not even unloaded from railway platforms.

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The assassination has not stopped until recently, and the military leadership does not take drastic measures. The workers of the regional committee of the party, together with a group of border guards, tried to detain those fleeing from the front. On the highway near Ivatsevichi, we temporarily managed to stop this shameful flight. But here it is necessary to take more serious and urgent measures of struggle on the part of the military command.

It was also an outrageous fact that the headquarters of the [28th] corps, without establishing contact with the regional committee, went to the command post outside the city [Brest], having lost contact with the units. Thus, many commanders and political workers, instead of organizing an evacuation in a panic, fled the city, primarily saving their families, and the Red Army soldiers fled in disorder.

Regional Committee and City Committee KI (b) B together with the region. At first, the NKVD and NKGB departments tried to restore order in the city [Brest], but they could not do anything effectively, since the Red Army units retreated in panic. Therefore, not knowing the situation, having no connection with the military command, not counting on the combat readiness of the military units, we were forced to leave the city of Brest.

The Regional Committee of the CIB)B believes that it is necessary to take the most urgent and decisive measures to restore order in the 4th Army and strengthen the leadership of the 4th Army.

Secretary of the Brest Regional Committee of the KI(b)B Tupitsyn" [18].

The document contains a resolution by I.V. Stalin - "T. Malenkov. AND." and G.K. Zhukova: "The commander of the 4th Army was removed from work and put on trial. Zhukov. 9.USH 1941 "".

The secretary of the regional committee painted a rather gloomy picture of the general flight. Accusing the command of the 4th Army of being ready for military action, he probably knew that the military had their hands tied on the eve of the war, but for obvious reasons he does not mention this. And not all of them fled. He could only see a picture of the retreat along the Warsaw highway, but did not know what measures the army command was taking to delay the enemy. Things were somewhat better with the occupation of assigned positions in PribOVO and

'  
A.A. Korobkov was arrested on July 8 and on July 22

Military tribunal shot.

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OdVO, where formations after the exercises did not return to their permanent deployment points and partially occupied their cover areas (lines).

B7.15 On June 22, 1941, NPO Directive No. 2 was signed in Moscow:

"June 22, 1941] at 00400 in the morning, German aviation, without any reason, raided our airfields and cities along the western border and bombarded them.

At the same time, German troops opened artillery fire in different places and crossed our border.

In connection with the German attack on the Soviet Union, unheard of in its arrogance, I ORDER:

1. Troops to attack the enemy forces with all their strength and means and destroy them in the areas where they have violated the Soviet border. From now on, until further notice by the ground forces, do not cross the border (emphasis added by us. - Auth.)."

2. Reconnaissance and combat aviation to establish the places of concentration of enemy aviation and the grouping of his ground forces.



Destroy aircraft at enemy airfields and bomb groupings of his ground forces with powerful strikes by bomber and attack aircraft.

Air strikes should be carried out to the depth of German territory up to 100-150 km.

Bomb Koenigsberg and Memel.

Do not raid the territory of Finland and Romania until special instructions" [19].

The front commanders tried, using the mechanized corps and their reserves, to act in accordance with the received directive, although it was already clear that in the conditions of the disorganization of command and control of troops, it would hardly be possible to turn the tide. So, in pursuance of NPO directive No. 2, the headquarters of the Western Front ordered:

"Commander of the 4th Army.

The commander of the ZapOVO ordered: to decisively destroy the bands that had broken through and were breaking through, for which, first of all, use the Oborin corps (14 microns). With regard to action

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follow the "red package". Use aviation for joint attacks with mechanized units. I pay special attention to communication. Use radio communication, communication of VNOS posts, delegates on airplanes directly to the headquarters of the district and to the nearest telegraph or telephone exchange. Inform every two hours. I place the responsibility for this on you."

It was assumed that in wartime the leadership of the troops would be carried out by the High Command, which would be headed by People's Commissar of Defense Marshal Timoshenko. But even the very first hours of the war showed that he and his apparatus were not in a position to exercise command of the army in the field in the extremely difficult situation that had arisen. On the morning of June 22, Timoshenko and Zhukov reported this to Stalin in the presence of members of the Politburo of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks and proposed the creation of the Headquarters of the High Command. However, Stalin did not make a decision then. Meanwhile, Timoshenko, without the consent of Stalin, could not solve almost a single issue on his own. It turned out, as it were, two commanders: Timoshenko - legal, who, without Stalin's sanction, did not have the right to give orders to the army in the field, and Stalin - the actual one. The need to coordinate them with Stalin each time important decisions were made made it difficult to manage troops and often led to delays in decision making in a rapidly changing environment. To clarify the situation and provide

assistance to the front commanders, Stalin, in accordance with an earlier decision, decided to send responsible persons of the People's Commissariat of Defense and the General Staff there.

Stalin called Zhukov in the afternoon:

"<...> Our front commanders do not have sufficient experience in directing military operations and, apparently, are somewhat confused. The Politburo has decided to send you to

'  
The decision to create the Headquarters of the High Command was taken on June 23, 1941 and formalized by the protocol of the Politburo of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks No. 34 in the form of a joint Decree of the Council of People's Commissars and the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks. It included: People's Commissar of Defense Marshal Timoshenko (chairman), Zhukov, Stalin, Molotov, Voroshilov, Budyonny and People's Commissar of the Navy Kuznetsov.

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Southwestern Front as a representative of the Headquarters of the High Command <...>.

- And who will lead [the General Staff in such a difficult situation?

I.V. Stalin replied:

Leave Vatutin behind.

Then, somewhat irritably, he added:

"Don't waste your time, we'll manage somehow" [21].

A strange decision: to leave the General Staff at such a crucial moment without its leader. After all, quite recently, Stalin, at an expanded meeting of the Politburo, stated the opposite: the commanders of the troops of the districts and armies are 100% exceptionally experienced in military terms.

Nerals - participants in the Civil War who served in the Red Army for at least 20 years. They also decided to send representatives of the [High Command] to other fronts: to the Western Front - Deputy People's Commissars of Defense Marshals Shaposhnikov and Kulik with a group of generals, to the North Western Front - Colonel General Meretskov.

At 21.15 on June 22, the Main Military Council issued Directive No. 3 to the Military Councils of the North-Western, Western and South-Western Fronts:

"1. The enemy, inflicting blows from the Suvalkovsky ledge on Olita and from the Zamostye region on the Vladimir-Volynsky, Radzekhov front, auxiliary blows in the directions of Tilsit, Siauliai and Sedlec, Volkovysk, during 22.6, suffering large

losses, achieved little success in these areas.

On the remaining sections of the state border with Germany and on the entire state border with Romania, enemy attacks were repulsed with heavy losses for him.

2. The immediate task of the troops on June 23-24 is:

a) encircle and destroy the enemy Suwalki grouping with concentric concentrated strikes by the troops of the North-Western and Western Fronts and capture the Suwalki area by the end of 24.6:

6) powerful concentric strikes of mechanized corps, all aviation of the Southwestern Front and other troops

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5bA to surround and destroy the enemy grouping advancing in the direction of Vladimir-Volynsky, Brody. By the end of June 24, capture the area of Lublin" [22].

Further, in the directive, tasks were set for the fronts, the content of which did not correspond at all to the real situation. Under the conditions of enemy dominance in the air and the loss of command and control, it was not possible to organize joint actions of mechanized corps subordinate to different authorities. As a result, the hastily prepared and uncoordinated in place and time counterattacks by the troops of the Northwestern (June 23-24) and Western Fronts (June 23-25) had practically no effect on the actions of the enemy strike groupings and only led to significant losses. . In addition, attempts to launch counterattacks ruled out the possibility of creating a stable defense. At the same time, the advancement of the reserves of the fronts from the depths in order to restore a continuous front, in essence, played into the hands of the Germans, who feared most of all that the main forces of the personnel Red Army would not allow themselves to be defeated at the border, but would retreat to a line convenient for defense. Western Dvina - Dnieper. The German tank wedges continued their rapid offensive, trying to encircle the main forces of the Western Front, located in the Bialystok salient. Our command failed to uncover this plan of the enemy in a timely manner and in full measure. The maximum that was allowed was an attempt by the Germans to close the pincers in the Volkovysk area (see Diagram 1).

The situation was somewhat better in the zone of the South-Western Front, which was ordered, firmly holding the state border with Hungary, to encircle and destroy the enemy grouping with concentric strikes in the general direction towards Lublin by the forces of the 5th and 6th armies and all front aviation. However, despite the general superiority in forces over the enemy, it was not possible to complete the task here either. June 26-29 in the Lutsk region,

Rivne, Brody was the largest tank battle of World War II. Our troops partially succeeded only in stopping the advance of the German troops. At

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this is a huge loss. in tanks led to the virtual cessation of the existence of most of the mechanized corps of this front.

In essence, the main forces of the armies of the first echelon in the three main western border districts (Pri BOVO, ZapOVO and KOVO) - 30-35 divisions out of 37.5 were defeated already in the first two or three days of hostilities. Later, as a result of poorly organized counterattacks, deprived of proper air support, under the dominance of enemy aircraft, the main forces of these fronts were also defeated.

The High Command of the Red Army was compelled to order a withdrawal and organization of defense in the western direction along the line of the Western Dvina and the upper reaches of the Dnieper. The withdrawal of troops under the influence of the air and ground enemy proceeded in an unorganized manner, sometimes turning into a rout. A particularly difficult situation developed in the zone of the Western Front, where the enemy managed to encircle the main forces of our troops. On June 27, the Headquarters of the Civil Code ordered the 16th Army, which had concentrated in the zone of the South-Western Front, to concentrate in its entirety in the Smolensk area in the Reserve of the High Command. It was proposed by all means to expedite the loading of army formations and its transfer to a new area.

On the seventh day of the war, June 28, fascist troops occupied Minsk. Communication with the headquarters of the Western Front was interrupted. On the evening of June 29, an alarmed Stalin, together with Molotov, Malenkov, Mikoyan and Beria, went to the People's Commissariat of Defense to sort out the situation on the spot.

From the memoirs of A.I. Mikoyan:

"<...> In the People's Commissariat there were Timoshenko, Zhukov (summoned by Stalin from the South-Western Front on June 26. - Auth.), Vatutin. Stalin kept calm, asking where the command of the Belorussian military district was, what kind of connection was there.

Zhukov reported that the connection was lost and for the whole day could not make it.

Then Stalin asked other questions: why did the Germans allow a breakthrough, what measures were taken to establish communications between IT.D.

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Zhukov answered what measures had been taken, said that he had sent people, but no one knew how long it would take to establish communication.

We talked quietly for about half an hour. Then Stalin exploded: what kind of General Staff, what kind of chief of staff, who is so confused, has no connection with the troops, does not represent anyone and does not command anyone. There was complete helplessness at the headquarters. Since there is no connection, the headquarters is powerless to LEAD.

Zhukov, of course, experienced the state of affairs no less than Stalin, and such a cry from Stalin was insulting to him. And this courageous man burst into tears like a woman and ran out into another room. Molotov followed him. We were all in a dejected state. After 53-10 minutes, Molotov brought Zhukov, outwardly calm, but his eyes were still wet.

According to the memoirs of N.S. Khrushchev, Stalin, after visiting the General Staff, told his comrades-in-arms: "Lenin left us the proletarian Soviet state, and we asked for it" - and left for a nearby dacha, where he stayed until | July [24].

Having identified the direction of the enemy's main attack, the Headquarters decided to transfer the main efforts of our troops from the southwestern strategic direction to the western one. Following the 16th Army for the transfer to Belarus | July began urgent loading into the echelons and formations of the 19th Army. But this regrouping had to be carried out under the conditions of an acute shortage of time and under the bombs of the 2nd Air Force of the Luftwaffe. On the same day, by order of the Headquarters of the Civil Code, the 19th, 20th, 21st and 22nd armies were included in the troops of the Western Front.

The extent of the defeat. During the battles of the initial period of the war, the main forces of the four fronts of the active army were defeated within three weeks. The main part of the regular army was lost - 100 divisions out of 170, of which 28 were completely destroyed, 72 divisions lost 50% or more of their composition in people and military equipment [25]. The Red Army suffered heavy losses in tanks, artillery and aviation.

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Table 1

LOSSES OF THE RED ARMY IN THE MAIN  
STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS IN THE INITIAL PERIOD  
OF THE GREAT PATRIOTIC WAR

Period

07/09/41 07/09/41 07/06/41  
burns

irrevocable 75 202 341 073 172 323 sanitary 13 284 76 717  
69 271 human

Total 88,486,417,790 241,594

% of initial headcount  
- 17.8% 66.6% 27.9%

Arrows- | total 341,000 521,200 169,800

WHAT

weapons | average daily 18,944 28,956 11,320 total 2523 4799 4381 38

tanks

total 3561 9427 5806

67 2  
p | seam

Source: Russia and the USSR in the wars of the twentieth century. Losses of the armed forces. Ed.  
G.F. Krivosheev. M.: OLMA-PRESS, 2001. S. 267-268, 484.

Thus, our army lost, according to our data, 747,870 people in 18 days of hostilities (in the  
South-Western direction - in 15 days), while only irretrievable losses in people amounted to  
588,598 people, sanitary -

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159,272. Losses in tanks amounted to 11,703 units, guns and mortars - 18,794, combat aircraft -  
3985. The Western Front suffered the greatest losses. By the end of the third week in the main  
- the western strategic direction - the German troops were already standing at the gates of  
Smolensk, having completed another encirclement of our significant forces. Only in  
this direction from June 22 to | August 1941, according to German data, about 640 thousand  
people were taken prisoner, more than 6300 tanks and more than 4800 guns were captured  
[26].

In addition, in the first two or three weeks of the war, considerable stocks of material resources concentrated on the territory of the border districts were lost. As a result, the enemy immediately gained an enormous superiority in the means of armed struggle. Without their replenishment, it was impossible to organize resistance to a well-armed and equipped enemy. In subsequent battles, the Wehrmacht was opposed by formations and units hastily formed or replenished with insufficiently trained personnel. In addition to heavy losses in people, weapons, military equipment and stocks of materiel, the army and people of our country experienced a deep moral shock, which was far from being overcome immediately. The consequences of defeat in the initial period of the war continued to affect throughout 1941.

On the 12th day of the war, Halder wrote in his diary that the war with Soviet Russia was won within two weeks [27]! Indeed, not a single army in the world, placed in such unthinkable difficult conditions and suffering enormous losses in the very first days of the war, could not recover. But in this case Halder was cruelly mistaken. The Red Army not only recovered, but, in the end, managed to turn the tide of the war in its favor and achieve victory. But the road to it was long and very difficult.

The history of the terrible catastrophe that befell our country and the Red Army in the early summer of 1941 still keeps many unanswered questions about its causes and culprits. Unanswered, because the official version, full of myths, legends and obvious lies about those tragic events, never suited the Soviet people, who brought innumerable victims on the altar of Victory. The legend of the sudden

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attack and the overwhelming numerical superiority of the enemy in tanks and aircraft was invented by I. Stalin for self-justification. It has long been refuted by Soviet and German archival documents.

Why did our country and people, who spared no effort and means to train the armed forces, suddenly find themselves in danger of losing their freedom and independence? Why did the numerous Red Army, which had more tanks in its composition than all the armies of the world put together, outright lose the frontier battle, and then suffered a whole series of crushing defeats? Was it the result of subjective mistakes made by the country's leadership? Undoubtedly. But then, what were they, what were their causes, and finally, who is guilty of them? Or was such a sad outcome of events predetermined by objective reasons? But then why did our army and people, despite the brutal defeats in the first half of the war, not only manage to recover from their consequences, but also achieve victory?

Disputes about the reasons for the defeat of our armies in the border battle among historians and publicists do not stop to this day. Various versions are put forward, up to the most incredible. Most often, among the main reasons for the defeat of our troops in the initial period of the war, they name the suddenness of the enemy attack and the untimely bringing of our troops to combat readiness. This placed our troops, which remained in a peacetime position, in incredibly difficult initial conditions. At the same time, one can sometimes come across assertions that no "surprise attack" is confirmed by any documents other than "memories and reflections" of those who shamefully lost the beginning of the war. Like, what kind of surprise can there be if everyone knew about the imminent start of the war and were preparing for it?

The Red Army was quite combat-ready. In terms of the number of personnel, equipment with the main types of weapons and military equipment, material resources, it was not much inferior to the Wehrmacht, and in terms of the number of tanks and aircraft it was much superior to it. However, the Germans, due to covert advancement and deployment

thirty

On June 21, we managed to take full advantage of the unpreparedness of our troops for immediate action to repel the attack. It is unlikely that anyone will deny that the German attack really came as a surprise to them. The infamous "TASS Statement of June 14" also played a negative role here, which to a certain extent disorientated the population of the country and the army, and contributed to weakening the vigilance of the personnel of the troops.

But, apparently, the matter is not only in the suddenness of the German attack. After all, even later, during the battles of 1941 and 1942, when the Germans no longer succeeded (and if they succeeded, then rarely even in certain areas) to find our troops sleeping in barracks and airfields clogged with uncamouflaged aircraft, they did not once put our troops on the brink of disaster. Most likely, the unsuccessful outcome of the border and later battles for us rested, first of all, on the different degree of preparation of the German and Soviet troops for a modern war, on the different level of their ability to fight.

So, what is the point after all - the SUDDENNESS of the attack or the unpreparedness of the Red Army for the war that was imposed on the Soviet Union?

Some historians, for example, believe that the Red Army was ready for offensive operations, but not ready for defense! They accuse Stalin that he missed his chance to seize the initiative and radically change the situation in his favor by inflicting a sudden preemptive strike on the Wehrmacht. Proving the possibility of success of such



strike, they paint a similar picture of the events of June 22, but in a mirror image, when we would have managed to surprise the German troops. It seems to us that at the same time they are subconsciously projecting the high military art and enormous capabilities of the Red Army, convincingly demonstrated by it in the victorious years of 1944-1945, onto the Red Army of the 1941 model. and means. It was also necessary to be able to apply them, we needed a modern military theory, we needed commanders and staffs trained in accordance with this theory, capable of commanding troops in a modern way, and we needed these troops themselves,

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able to accurately and efficiently carry out the orders of their commanders.

Unfortunately, the high potential of our troops in the initial period of the war was never realized. Why did it happen? After all, the Soviet people, sacrificing a lot in the name of building a bright future, spent the lion's share of their efforts on strengthening the country's defense capability. In the conditions of a hostile environment, the political leadership of the Soviet Union set the task of creating powerful armed forces that could "be able to fight against any coalition of world capitalist powers and inflict a decisive and crushing blow and defeat on the armies of these powers" [28]. How was this task solved, how effectively was the time given to us by history used?

We are convinced that the events of 1941 can be understood only by examining, at least briefly, the situation that developed in Europe in the prewar years. In any case, the events preceding the Great Patriotic War could not but leave their mark on all subsequent ones, including the beginning of the war. By the way, in Russian historiography there are almost no studies devoted to their comprehensive analysis, taking into account the documents introduced into scientific circulation in recent years. It is important, on the basis of facts and documents, to understand why this or that decision was made to build the country's armed forces, to find out what they managed to do over the years and what they did not manage to do from what they should have done. We must finally understand why our victorious march on Berlin began from the walls of Moscow and went through Stalingrad, the Caucasus and Kharkov. It would be naive to confine ourselves to explanations from official history. Our people realized their value even during the war, when our army was retreating, leaving millions of Soviet people to the mercy of fate, who after the war were indiscriminately counted as almost accomplices of the enemy.

It is impossible to answer many of the questions posed here without examining the history of the development of the armed forces of Germany and the USSR, and the military-theoretical views of the military leadership of these countries on the methods of waging war. Especially

but it is important to consider the formation and application of

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tank troops of the opposing sides, which played a decisive role in the course of maneuverable combat operations in the initial period of World War II.

Only by evaluating the real mobilization and combat readiness of the Red Army for the war that was imposed on the Soviet Union, one can answer many of the questions posed here and draw reasonable conclusions about the real reasons for its defeat in the summer of 1941.

Chapter 1

## PREPARING GERMANY FOR REVENGE

### THE REICHSWEHR AND ITS COOPERATION WITH THE RED ARMY

The victorious countries in the First World War did their best to ensure that the once formidable, but in the end defeated as a result of their combined efforts, the German army would never again be able to revive as an instrument of aggression. To this end, in the conditions of the Versailles Treaty, they provided for a whole range of measures. Thus, from March 31, 1920, the size of the Reichswehr was limited to ten divisions, including seven infantry and three cavalry, and two headquarters of army corps, and its total strength was 100 thousand people. The organizational structure of each type of divisions and the staffs of all units and subunits were drawn up in detail. The appendices to the treaty listed in detail the weapons allowed to the Germans: 84,000 rifles, 18,000 carbines (for cavalrymen), 792 heavy and 1,134 light machine guns, 63 medium and 189 light trench mortars and bomb throwers, 204 77-mm guns and 84,105 -mm howitzers.

Thus, one machine gun per fifty soldiers, and one field gun per 350. Not a lot for a regular army: since the time of Napoleon, it has been established that there should be 4-6 guns per 1000 soldiers. The Reichswehr did not even live up to this old norm, not to mention the fact that all the guns and howitzers allowed to the Germans were classified as light, and anti-tank, anti-aircraft and heavy artillery were completely forbidden to them. Even the amount of ammunition could not exceed the not too generous limits set by the allies. Germany was not allowed to have the most effective means of armed

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combat: combat aviation, tank troops and chemical weapons. Such an army, limited in numbers and weapons, could maintain order inside the country and provide border guards, but was not capable of waging any large-scale modern war. Actually, this is what the winners were striving for.

The drafters of the Treaty of Versailles also took care that it was impossible to quickly deploy a multimillion-strong army on the basis of the Reichswehr. To this end, Germany abolished conscription and its armed forces became purely professional. For soldiers, a minimum 12-year service life was established, and for officers, even more - 25 years. It was forbidden to serve German citizens in any military units of other countries, with the exception of the French Foreign Legion, and even send military delegations abroad. Thus, the Germans were deprived of any opportunity to prepare impressive manpower reserves for future mobilization. No less painful measures for potential dreamers of the coming revenge were the establishment of a maximum number of German officers - only four thousand people - and a ban on the re-establishment of the disbanded German General Staff and its military academy. These restrictions left the country without numerous professional commanding cadres capable of quickly training and leading masses of recruits if necessary.

Germany's foreign policy position after the First World War also deteriorated sharply. She lost her former military ally: the former Austro-Hungarian Empire collapsed into several independent states at once. At the same time, Austria remained a small and relatively weak country, and the main military industry of the former great power ended up in Czechoslovakia, whose population, due to old grievances, treated the Germans in a far from the best way. The Sudetenland, populated mainly by Germans, also ceded to Czechoslovakia, and this immediately created ground for dissension between it and Germany. And in the east of Europe, a new independent state arose - Poland. She got some of the former German Territories, and therefore she initially became an enemy to

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Germany and a natural ally of England and France. Thus, Germany found herself in a hostile environment, and in the event of entering into a general European war, she would have been forced from the very beginning to wage it on two fronts. Even Bismarck once warned the Germans against such an unfavorable situation, and the sad outcome of the First World War for Germany convincingly confirmed his correctness.

At first glance, the Versailles system took away from Germany

all hopes for the revival of the very spirit of militarism and guaranteed in advance the failure of any of its possible attempts to forcefully revise the results of the First World War. But many Germans had a completely different opinion on this matter. Among them was General Hans von Seeckt, commander-in-chief of the Reichswehr from 1920 to 1926. He was not only a military general and an excellent organizer, but also an extremely intelligent, versatile, educated and far-sighted person. He managed to lay the foundations for the strategy and tactics of a future war and create a small, but highly professional Reichswehr, which subsequently managed to deploy in a short time into a multi-million Wehrmacht. The fruits of the seeds sown by von Seeckt flourished on the battlefields of World War II.

Von Seeckt was able to discover in the blind fence of the Versailles restrictions, it would seem, a very small, but very important loophole: there was no limit on the number of German non-commissioned officers. And he used it to the fullest to turn the small Reichswehr into an "army of commanders" that could become a reliable base for the rapid growth of the future German army. In the 100,000th Head of the Reichswehr, Hans Reichswehr, only 4,000 served

von Seeckt (1930) officers and 36,500 enlisted men, but

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at the same time - 59,500 thousand non-commissioned officers [29]. At the disposal of von Seeckt were personnel selected in the truest sense of the word. Germany has long been a country of universal literacy, and as a result of the First World War, it formed a huge contingent of people with extensive combat experience. The post-war collapse of the economy and the massive unemployment associated with it forced many of them to try to enlist in the army, which guaranteed a relatively high, and most importantly, stable income. Of the 200,000 former officers of the Kaiser's army, only 3,000 of the most capable and promising were selected for the Reichswehr. The remaining one thousand officer vacancies were filled by non-commissioned officers who had especially distinguished themselves in battle, passed through the appropriate courses [30]. The prestige of military service in Germany has always remained very high. Even in the year 1928, which was quite prosperous for the country's economy, there were as many as 15 applicants for every vacancy in the army. As a result of capacious selection, the best of the best became the military. The positions of platoon commanders in the Reichswehr were mainly occupied not by officers, but by sergeants, who were well prepared for this. When start-

Germany was remilitarized, many of the former non-commissioned officers received officer ranks.

Von Seeckt did everything to save the brain of the German army - its general staff, which was prohibited by the Treaty of Versailles. With him, he acted very simply: he transferred some departments of the General Staff to other army structures, and renamed its core into the Military Directorate (Tgarrepat ()) And he himself became its chief, while remaining the commander-in-chief of the Reichswehr. The main task of the newly-baked organization was to develop a strategy and tactics for future battles based on the experience of the just ended war and von Seeckt's own ideas.

At that time, the victorious countries in the last war paid insufficient attention to comprehending its experience and creating new methods and means of struggle. They did not see any special need for this, because they won, thereby convincingly proving the correctness and effectiveness of their strategy and tactics. Unlike the victors, von Seeckt and other German military theorists stubbornly tried to analyze

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identify the reasons for their defeat and develop effective recipes for future victories. To study the experience of the recent war in [Germany, from the very beginning, more than 400 officers and retirees (over 10% of the entire officer corps of the Reichswehr) were involved, and by the mid-20s. their number exceeded 500. Along with the fresh military doctrine, new staffs of subdivisions, units, formations and headquarters of the future German army were developed, which, of course, did not fit into the Versailles restrictions. No one in the Reichswehr raised the slightest doubt about their potential demand. One of the decisive tools for achieving victory, von Seeckt chose the high mobility of troops. In 1921, he wrote in a memorandum with the eloquent title "Main considerations for the restructuring of our armed forces":

"<...> the salvation of the weak depends less than ever on tough defense. On the contrary, it consists in a mobile attack" [31].

Mobility was intended to compensate for the obvious weakness of the Reichswehr, which, due to the Versailles restrictions, was inferior to all its potential opponents both in number of personnel and in armament. It was based on motorizing troops and equipping them with tanks at the earliest opportunity. During World War I, the Germans were too late to appreciate the enormous potential of the tank forces, and then they were sorely lacking resources. Therefore, before its completion, they managed to produce only 20 tanks. This was in striking contrast to her main opponents: England produced 2636 tanks during the same time, and France

one and a half times more - 3870 [32]. In tank and motorized units, von Seeckt saw a new, completely independent branch of the army, and at the same time he realized the importance and necessity of its support in combat by aviation.

It is for this reason that von Seeckt paid close attention to the air force. He managed to keep 180 pilot officers in the service of the Reichswehr, and this despite the fact that there were not only no planes for them, but it was not even foreseen. However, von Seeckt

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he tried to preserve in the German army the foundation for the future revival of a full-fledged air force, and he achieved his goal. In the Reichswehr, both the tactics of combat aviation and the methods of combating it were comprehensively studied. Both theoretical classes and practical exercises were devoted to these topics. Von Seeckt also succeeded in obtaining government subsidies for German civil aviation and gliding, which he regarded as an important aid to the re-establishment of an air force in Germany when the time came. In his memorandum, he advocated that the future combat aviation of Germany should become an independent branch of the military [33]. A feature of the German view on the use of combat aviation was the setting of purely tactical tasks for it. The Reichswehr command did not pay much attention to the planning of strategic bombing and the creation of appropriate heavy aircraft for this task, which was considered the most important for British and American aviation in the interwar period. However, the Germans, unlike the British and Americans, did not intend to wage a long war of attrition.

The leadership of the Reichswehr was also aware of the urgent need for a sharp increase in the level of knowledge of military personnel, especially officers. Without this, it was impossible to master new complex types of military equipment in a short time. Therefore, extremely high standards of education, and above all technical education, were set in the Reichswehr for all officers and non-commissioned officers without exception. The requirements for the physical condition of military personnel were also unusually tough there. But, of course, the main attention was paid to professional training, and not only individual. The cohesion of subunits, units and formations, their interaction with each other and with other military branches was carefully worked out and brought to perfection.

The most important feature of the training of both German officers of all levels and non-commissioned officers was the education in them of maximum independence. The commander received from his superior the task only in the most general form and had to find the best solution for its implementation, and then put it into practice. In most-

In other armies of the world, the commanders were required, first of all, to unquestioningly carry out detailed orders and orders from above. The German method developed in people initiative, independence and the desire to take responsibility both in making and in implementing their decisions. Such commanders grew in the professional sense much faster than thoughtless executors of other people's instructions.

Thus, the Germans tried to compensate for the limited size of their army by the highest quality of training of its personnel. But it still needed to be equipped with modern types of weapons, when the time came to throw off the hated shackles of Versailles. And they have not yet given Germany the opportunity to develop and produce combat aircraft, tanks, chemical weapons, heavy artillery, submarines, etc. A complete ban was also imposed on the import and export of weapons and military equipment. Military production remained possible on a strictly limited scale and only at enterprises known to the Entente inspectors. Even under such conditions, von Seeckt could not allow his army to fall hopelessly behind potential opponents in materiel. And the Germans did everything possible to prevent this from happening, purposefully and skillfully bypassing the Versailles restrictions.

First of all, they tried to transfer abroad that part of their military production, which Germany was forbidden to have by the victorious countries. Thus, the Junkers company created its branches in Sweden, Turkey and the USSR, Fokker in Holland, Rohrbach in Denmark, and Dornier in Switzerland and Italy. The Krupp concern acquired control over the well-known Swedish company Bofors. In its design bureaus, German specialists participated in the development of the latest artillery systems, including those for the Reichswehr. It is from there that the roots of the famous German 88-mm anti-aircraft gun grow, which was widely and very successfully used on all fronts of the Second World War, including against tanks. Another branch of Krupp in Sweden was the Landsverk company, which produced armored vehicles. There, in the early 30s, the Germans began to work out a torsion bar suspension, which

in the YEARS of World War II, many of their tanks were equipped. The Rheinmetall Corporation acquired a controlling stake in the Swiss company Soloturn, and instead of traditional watches, the Swiss began to produce machine guns, machine guns and anti-tank rifles.

Firms Vulkan, Germany and Weser jointly created a design bureau for the development of new types of submarines for foreign orders and registered

him in Holland. In order to increase the competitiveness of its products, this office, called the Stresch Katoog woog Speersboim (15), received cash subsidies from the secret fund of the Reichswehr. Based on the projects developed in [5], which included Soviet submarines of the "C" type, the Germans created their most numerous and successful submarines of the UP series during World War II. In addition, German designers of military equipment, known throughout the world for their high qualifications, were recruited to work in other countries. So, a whole design bureau under the leadership of Eduard Grote from March 1930 to August 1931 developed a project for the TG tank in Leningrad (abbreviation "Grote tank"). Working abroad, the German specialists were able not only to preserve, but also to improve their professional skills. The experience of creating the latest military equipment was most useful to them after the start of the remilitarization of Germany by the Nazis.

All of the above was done perfectly legally, except for secret subsidies, of course. But the Germans did not disdain and not legal ways. They needed them in order to be able to teach the Reichswehr the practical use of prohibited weapons and develop tactics for using them. All this was not feasible in Germany itself, so the German leadership began to look for foreign test sites. They were supposed to be located away from the watchful eyes of the Entente inspectors, who supervised the observance by the Germans of the terms of the Treaty of Versailles.

Cooperation between the Reichswehr and the Red Army. On April 16, 1922, in the Italian resort town of Rapallo, representatives of the RSFSR and Germany signed an agreement

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which is difficult to overestimate for both countries. It opened up the possibility of a close partnership between the Reichswehr and the Red Army, which, of course, proved to be mutually beneficial. The Reichswehr got the opportunity to create secret schools and training grounds in the depths of the territory of the USSR in order to conduct personnel training there, as well as research and testing of those types of military equipment that were forbidden to it by the Treaty of Versailles. At the same time, the Red Army was able to adopt advanced German experience and train its cadets with the help of German teachers. In addition, close contacts with the Reichswehr were then the only opportunity for the leadership of the Red Army to get to know the modern Western army directly.

On April 15, 1925, an agreement was signed on the organization of an aviation school in Lipetsk. Over the years of her work, more than 120 German fighter pilots and about 100 observer pilots were trained there, and in total - 450 flight personnel. Under the guidance of German instructors, almost the same



the number of Soviet pilots and aircraft mechanics [34]. Along with the curriculum, the school also tested the material part: aircraft, aircraft engines, including heavy fuel, pressurized cabins, aviation instruments, sights, radio and photographic equipment (including photomachine guns), bombs, small arms and etc. The tactics of using combat aircraft and methods of bombing, including from high altitudes and from dives, were practiced there. Among the most famous German graduates of the Lipetsk Aviation School were the future Colonel General Hans Jeshonek, who served as Chief of the General Staff of the Luftwaffe, and Kurt Student, who commanded the German parachute troops. But the future commander-in-chief of the Luftwaffe, Hermann Goering, contrary to common speculation, not only did not study at this school, but also never visited Lipetsk.

An agreement on the creation of a tank school near Kazan under the code name "Kama" was concluded on October 2, 1926, but it began to function in the spring of 1929. 30 German and 65 Soviet cadets graduated from it. More than 20 German officers worked at the school as teachers and tank testers. Among its German graduates were six future

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division commanders. And one of her superiors, Josef Garpe, later rose to the rank of colonel general and commanded an army group. Rumors that Heinz Guderian studied at Kama are in no way true, he only inspected this school in the summer of 1932. But even without Guderian, the school played a crucial role in the development of German tank forces. Half of the officers of the first training tank unit of the Reichswehr were graduates of the Kama school, and one of them, Ernst Volkheim, developed combat regulations for German tankers. It is equally important that the former teachers of Kama and many of its graduates led the training of tankers in the military schools of Nazi Germany.

For training in Kama, the USSR provided not only a place for accommodation, but also the material part. In addition to German equipment, they used the Vickers-Carden-Lloyd wedges acquired in England by MagK UT. They were provided by the Soviet side in exchange for German auxiliary equipment for the Red Army. And on April 21, 1930, on the orders of Voroshilov, the 3rd Tank Regiment of the Red Army, stationed not far from the school, in Kazan, transferred to it from its composition a separate tank platoon of five MS-1 tanks [35].

In addition to studies, the first ten German tanks of five different types, designed in the 1920s, underwent a practical test at the school training ground. It was impossible to test them in Germany, so German engineers and technicians were sent to Kazan to evaluate and further improve the latest technology, among which was the chief designer of tanks of the company

"Krupp" Wölfert. Based on the test results, the Germans made very important conclusions and put them into practice in their serial production. As a result, German tanks on the eve and at the beginning of World War II were noticeably superior to the combat vehicles of their opponents, but not in armament, armor protection or mobility, but mainly in the following features:

- the tank commander was relieved of all other duties and received at his disposal a commander's cupola with excellent observation devices;

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- the gunner was located near the center of gravity of the tank, so he was not subjected to large fluctuations during its movement and had optimal conditions for firing;

- the loader stood on the suspended floor of the tower, and not at the bottom of the hull, which greatly facilitated his work;

- without exception, all tanks were equipped with radio communications;

- the tanks were spacious enough and comfortable for their crews.

The Germans realized and appreciated the importance and necessity of all these qualities as a result of testing their first tanks at the Kama training ground [36].

Another secret facility was the Tomka Chemistry School located near the city of Volsk, Saratov Region. The agreement on it was signed on August 21, 1926. Its main tasks were to test new devices and methods for the use of poisonous substances with the help of artillery, combat vehicles and aircraft, as well as new means and methods of degassing. Fortunately, the staff and graduates of this school did not have a chance to demonstrate their ability to conduct chemical warfare in practice. It is difficult to say how many lives were saved due to this, but it can be said with confidence that there are many, because the work of this particular school was considered by Soviet technical specialists to be the most valuable and useful for the Red Army [37].

Both sides diligently maintained high secrecy in everything connected with the functioning of the schools. Cadets sent there for training from Germany were temporarily excluded from the lists of the Reichswehr and were restored to the cadre only after their return. They came to the USSR in civilian clothes with passports in someone else's name. [robes with German pilots who died in Lipetsk as a result of accidents were sent for burial to their homeland, boarded up in boxes with the inscription "Details of ma

tires."

The Germans highly valued the

in the USSR, the ability to secretly circumvent the restrictions of the Treaty of Versailles. They spent a lot of money on the construction, organization and operation of the Lipetsk Aviation School and the Kama and Tomka schools. In 1928 on

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For these purposes, 5.7 million marks were spent, or about 8% of all German arms spending in the amount of 73.7 million. The Germans annually allocated two million marks for the aviation school alone [38]. It is significant that no money was spared for secret schools even during the most difficult period of the world economic crisis of 1929-1933. True, then there are several appropriations

decreased, but continued to be very significant. So, in 1929, the German costs for the Kama school amounted to one and a half million marks, and for the Tomka school - 780 thousand. In 1930, the Germans spent 1.24 million marks on the Kama [39].

The importance attached to schools is well characterized by the high level of leaders who came there with inspections. Among them were even two commanders-in-chief of the Reichswehr, who held this position at different times - Werner von Blomberg and Kurt von Hammerstein Eckvord. The work of schools ceased in the second half of 1933 after Hitler came to power, who did not consider it necessary to continue to hide violations of the Versailles Treaty. Yes, and a lot of money was spent on the work of schools abroad. The Soviet side also believed that the German schools had exhausted their practical value, so that the desire to stop their work was mutual.

In gratitude for the permission to organize and maintain the aforementioned secret schools in the USSR, the Germans provided Soviet commanders with the opportunity to study at the final, fourth year of the restored General Staff Academy, in which the traditions of the Kaiser military academy, which almost all German military leaders graduated from, were preserved and multiplied. It was very difficult for the officers of the Reichswehr to get there: at least 6-8 candidates applied for each place. But doing is not the same as finishing. Dropouts in the process of intense study were very large: on average, only 10 officers out of 30 admitted to the academy each year managed to reach the last year. In this course in Berlin, there was intensive academic training, and the main subjects studied were corps and army operations, the interaction of types and branches of troops, as well as foreign armies [40]. After the successful completion of this course, further military career listening to Telam, as a rule, was secured.

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The President of the Weimar Republic P. von Hindenburg welcomes the delegation of the Red Army at the maneuvers in Germany (1932).

Second left - M.N. Tukhachevsky

It was in this holy of holies of the elite of the German officers that students from the USSR were accepted for training starting from 1926, 2-5 people a year. The first to go there in 1926 were the teachers of the Frunze Military Academy M.S. Svechnikov and S.N. Krasilnikov. In November of the following year, they were followed by I.P. Uborevich, E.F. Appoga and R.P. Eideman. If the last two stayed there only 3.5 months, then Uborevich studied for 13 months [41]. Among the Red commanders who studied at the German Academy of the General Staff were E.Ya. Admin, E.P. Belov, M.N. Dreyer, I.N. Dubova, P.E. Dybenko, A.I. Egorov, Zh.D. Zomberg, N.I. Latsis, M.K. Levandovsky, E.D. Lepin, R.V. Longva, V.M. Primakov, S.P. Uritsky, I.E. Yakir and others, more than 20 people in total. Not all of them completed the full last year of the academy, some studied there for only half a year or even less, and not in the last year.

Soviet commanders went to Germany not only as apprentices. So, Yakir, without interruption from his own studies at the German Academy of the General Staff, read a course of lectures there

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on the history of the Civil War in Russia. His speeches made such a strong impression on the listeners that the President of Germany himself, the commander of the First World War, Field Marshal Paul von Hindenburg, handed him the classic work of von Schlieffen "Cannes" with a dedicatory inscription: "In memory of Mr. Yakir - one of the talented military leaders of our time" [42]. Kraskoms in Germany studied not only at the academy. Only in the period from 1925 to September 1933 156 Soviet military men were trained at various German courses [43].

German specialists participated in the training of red commanders and in Soviet educational institutions. So, in the period from 1930 to 1933, military history in the Soviet Academy of the Red Army named after Frunze was taught by Major F. Paulus, the future field marshal. Majors K. Brenne and G.-H. worked with him. Reinhardt. All three were sent to the USSR as military advisers by order of the German War Ministry. Tactics classes were taught there by Lieutenant Colonel V. Keitel and Major V. Model, who also later rose to the rank of Field Marshal of the German Army [44].

Beginning in 1925, regular mutual visits of observers began for maneuvers, tactical exercises and staff exercises of both armies. As a rule, divisions and corps were involved in full strength. Particular attention was paid to the tactics of maneuvering combat operations and methods of close interaction between various branches of the armed forces. The troops learned to advance as quickly as possible, not caring about maintaining a solid front and not looking back at the flanks. teachings, in

including command and staff, were an excellent school for any commander. Thanks to the special attention given in the German army to this most important form of combat training, the average German officer of the middle rank at the beginning of World War II had more experience in large-scale maneuvers than the average English or French general [45].

Uboevich, who was completing his studies at the academy, took part in the staff exercises under the leadership of the Commander-in-Chief of the Reichswehr von Blomberg. The theme of these exercises is extremely curious: the development of joint military operations of the Reichswehr

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and the Red Army against the allied armies of France and Poland [46]. This scenario did not come about by accident. Von Seeckt was a consistent supporter of the development of close contacts between the Reichswehr and the Red Army, not only for the sake of using training grounds in the USSR. He considered the Soviet country a natural partner of Germany, having common goals with it. Therefore he wrote:

“The rupture of the Versailles diktat can only be achieved by close contact with a strong Russia. Whether we like communist Russia or not does not matter. What we need is a strong Russia with broad borders on our side. So, no Poland and Lithuania between us ... And we will get our eastern borders until 1914. It is important for Germany to untie the Entente's fetters through Soviet Russia” [47].

Among other things, he saw the Russians as potential allies of the Germans in the fight against the Poles, which he hated. After all, Poland was not only a direct threat to the rear of Germany in the event of a conflict with France. At the same time, it was the cornerstone of the "cordon sanitaire" around the USSR, erected by the creators of the Versailles system. Von Seeckt unequivocally formulated his attitude towards this country in a memorandum addressed to Reich Chancellor J. Wirth dated September 11, 1922:

“The existence of Poland is unbearable and incompatible with the conditions of the existence of Germany. Poland must disappear—and will disappear with our help—because of its internal weakness and the actions of Russia... The destruction of Poland must become the basis of Germany's policy... Together with Poland, one of the strongest pillars of the Treaty of Versailles, the dominant position of France, will fall... This will be achieved by the forces of Russia and with the help of Russia” [48].

The enmity between Poles and Germans, as well as between Poles and Russians, had centuries-old roots. In addition, according to the Treaty of Versailles, Poland was given lands that Germany considered its own. The USSR also

there were territorial claims to Poland. Therefore, the alliance of both these countries against the Poles was based on

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a solid basis of mutual interests. An important area of cooperation between the Reichswehr and the Red Army was the exchange of intelligence information, and above all about the Polish army. On December 24, 1928, the head of the Main Directorate (intelligence) of the Headquarters of the Red Army Berzin, in response to the Germans' proposal, wrote:

"I think it expedient: <...> to accept the proposal on the exchange of intelligence data on Poland and the joint discussion of issues of mobilization and deployment of the Polish army" [49].

In the same 1928, People's Commissar of Defense Voroshilov even proposed to the Commander-in-Chief of the Reichswehr, von Blomberg, to jointly oppose Poland if the USSR or [Germany were attacked by it [50].

In general, the German influence on the development of the Red Army during the period of their close cooperation was extensive and very noticeable. This immediately caught the eye of the German military attaché in the USSR, Colonel Kestring, the future general. In the summer of 1931, he made a long trip around the Soviet Union, covering over 7000 km and inspecting many units and formations of the Red Army in the far corners of the country: in Berdichev, Kursk, Orenburg and Sverdlovsk. In his report on what he saw, Koestring wrote: "Our views and methods run like a red thread through their views and methods" [51].

It must be said that, despite all attempts to more widely introduce German training methods and non-German tactics in the Red Army, the results were somewhat different than in the Reichswehr. The difference between the two armies was too great both in the human material from which they were created, and in their equipment, and in the conditions of life and activity. In his report on his studies in Germany, Uborevich wrote quite frankly about this: "German specialists, including those in military affairs, are immeasurably superior to us" [52]. Nevertheless, the positive effect received by the Red Army from the pre-war Soviet-German military cooperation can hardly be overestimated.

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Von Seeckt was dismissed from all his posts in October 1926 for inviting the Prince of Hohenzollern to attend the autumn maneuvers of the Reichswehr. But by that time he had already managed to create and left to his successors a well-established system of training troops and staffs, which in the future only needed to be maintained, so that his offspring did not stop in its development. The new German military leadership was primarily concerned with creating the prerequisites for a sharp increase in the size of the Reichswehr, if necessary. Direct preparations for such an event began as early as 1930. It was then that plans were developed to deploy three new divisions on the basis of each of the existing infantry divisions. After mobilization, the Reichswehr was to consist of 21 infantry and 3-4 cavalry divisions, 33 heavy artillery batteries, 55 anti-aircraft batteries, an aviation detachment and a tank battalion. Each artillery regiment of the infantry divisions was supposed to be reinforced with a division of medium-caliber guns, and the infantry regiments were to be armed with anti-tank guns [53]. The staffs of the newly created formations were supposed to be filled with veterans of the First World War. The main problem turned out to be the equipping of new formations and units: stocks of weapons and equipment were only enough for 2/3 of such an army. The ammunition situation was even worse. This situation was urgently needed to be corrected, so in 1932 Germany began a serious study of increasing the capacity of the military industry, corresponding to the expected growth of the army.

On January 30, 1933, Hitler was appointed Chancellor of Germany, who had long dreamed of destroying the Versailles system and building a "thousand-year Reich" on its ruins. After coming to power, he finally got the opportunity to turn these previously unfounded fantasies into reality. Vyshko-

Interestingly, later a similar system was introduced in the Red Army. According to it, on the basis of some peacetime units and formations, in the event of war, three similar formations were to be deployed. Such basic units and formations were called "triple deployment" regiments and divisions.

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Lean and perfectly prepared for immediate growth, the Reichswehr was the best gift to Hitler. Under him, the potential laid down in the German army by von Seeckt was fully realized. In the very first year of his stay in power, Hitler decided, already in peacetime, to carry out the program of military mobilization worked out earlier. According to his original plan, the size of the Reichswehr was to increase to 300 thousand people by 1937. But appetite comes with eating, and at the beginning of 1934, Hitler began to insist on moving this date to the autumn of that year. After the death of President Hindenburg on August 2, 1934, the last restrictions on Hitler in Germany disappeared. He immediately took over, in addition to chancellorship, also presidential powers,

assuming the official titles of Führer (leader of the people) and Reich Chancellor. Thus, Hitler acquired virtually absolute power in the country. The post of commander in chief of the country's armed forces, previously held by the president, also passed to Hitler. Moreover, the German military personnel from now on began to swear allegiance to him, and not to the state, as it was before.

Skillfully fomenting the growing revanchist sentiment in Germany, Hitler accelerated the process of remilitarization in the country. By the end of 1934, the Reichswehr had grown to 240,000 men, but that was only the beginning. The following year, the Nazis openly spit on the fundamental limitations of the Treaty of Versailles. On March 9, the organization of the Air Force in Germany was announced, and a week later it was introduced for military service. At the same time, the Reichswehr was renamed the Wehrmacht, and its composition began to increase from 10 to 36 divisions. The Reichswehr ceased to exist in 1935. By the Law of May 21, 1935, a one-year term of service was established for conscripts. Such a short period of training for soldiers was a necessary measure, because the army, during its rapid growth, could not immediately digest a large number of recruits. Too much dilution of regular soldiers by untrained newcomers inevitably led to a sharp decrease in the level of combat capability of units, so the Germans tried to avoid this. But already after 15 months, the rapid expansion of the ranks of the Wehrmacht made it possible to increase the service life in it to two years [54].

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Young people born in 1914 and subsequent years were drafted into the armed forces of Germany and underwent thorough military training there. Most of the men born in 1900 and earlier served in the Kaiser's army at one time and, as a rule, gained combat experience during the First World War. The ages of those born between 1901 and 1913 remained uncovered. These included about four million potential conscripts, the vast majority of whom had never been taught military science. That is why the current situation with the cadres of future soldiers was completely unacceptable for the Nazi leaders, and they tried to correct it. People who were not allowed through the army began to be called up for short-term military service of two or three months in special training units. After the start of the war, in the event of mobilization into the army, they were, as a rule, sent to reserve divisions, which they tried to use to defend calm sectors of the front, to guard the occupied territories, or to perform auxiliary functions. There they received proper training, after which they could be used in responsible areas.

Another headache for the personnel officers of the Wehrmacht was a noticeable decrease in the number of conscripts fit for military service in 1916-1918. births caused by a sharp drop in births



giving during the First World War. If in ordinary years about 300 thousand people were drafted into the German land army annually, then the "echo of war" reduced this figure to 250 thousand. Despite considerable growth difficulties, the Wehrmacht, built on the solid foundation of the Reichswehr, became more and more powerful right before our eyes. In 1935, there were 11 corps in it, which included 29 divisions and two brigades. By 1936, the number of corps had grown to 13, divisions to 39, and the following year they added another corps and one brigade [55].

By October 1937, there were already 590 thousand people under arms in Germany, and out of 39 divisions, three were tank and four were motorized. But only one brigade remained from the cavalry. Part of the cavalry regiments from the disbanded divisions were transferred to corps subordination, and the personnel

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the rest - in tank troops. In addition to personnel divisions, 29 reserve divisions were created, which were to become part of the army after the announcement of mobilization. Reservists who had recently served in the army were assigned to them, so their number continuously increased as the number of people who completed military service increased. In 1938, the number of corps was increased to 21, and the number of divisions to 51 (by that time only one of the brigades had survived). After the annexation of Austria, this number included its troops, which were reorganized into one tank, one light, two infantry and two mountain divisions of the Wehrmacht. With the capture of the Sudetenland of Czechoslovakia, another infantry division was formed mainly from the Germans there. In March 1939, the number of reserve divisions was increased to 51. They were all infantry, and 1,100 thousand people were assigned to them. It is interesting that the regular army, in which, in addition to exactly the same number of divisions, there was also a cavalry brigade, there were one and a half times fewer people in its ranks - 730 thousand. This is due to the fact that a significant proportion of reservists in case of war had to serve in auxiliary, security or training units, and not just in the field forces [56].

Thus, by September 1, 1939, the date of the German attack on Poland, the Reichswehr, which had not been very strong in composition, had recently turned into a mass army - the Wehrmacht, numbering 3,737,104 people, including training units, in which there were 996,040 people. In addition, 550 thousand people served in the air force [57]. The land army had only 1,310,000 regular servicemen, another 647,000 recently retired were well-trained reservists, 808,000 were considered untrained older reservists, and the rest were veterans of the First World War, who also needed to be taught how to use new models of weapons and equipment, as well as the tactics of modern warfare [58].

It is not difficult to see that the Germans were far from having enough trained personnel for such an enormous growth.

army, but they had practical experience of mobilization during the Anschluss and the Czechoslovak crisis. Using it, the Germans deployed their formations in four waves. In the 1st of them, there were 51 personnel divisions. All of them

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were fully equipped, trained and combat ready in peacetime. 78% of their personnel were regular military personnel, another 12% had just recently served in the army. The remaining 10% had to be taught from scratch, and they were assigned duties that did not require special knowledge and skills to perform them. The main strike force of the 1st wave was mobile troops: seven armored, four light and four motorized divisions. The 2nd wave consisted of 16 divisions, newly formed from reservists. They were somewhat worse armed and had a number of almost 2.5 thousand people less than the divisions of the 1st wave. There were only 6% of regular servicemen in them, but 83% of reservists who had recently served. 21 divisions of the 3rd wave were equipped exclusively with mobilized

there were practically no senior military personnel in them, and horse-drawn vehicles were even more widely used as transport. At the same time, they were armed with almost 200 machine guns more than the divisions of the 1st wave, and were intended for stationary defense. Finally, the 4th wave consisted of 14 training divisions, 9% of whose personnel, mainly officers and non-commissioned officers, were regular [59].

In the rapidly growing army, the problem of a shortage of command personnel became especially acute. To reduce it, 1,500 sergeant majors of the Reichswehr received officer ranks, 1,800 retirees and reserve officers were returned to active service, and another 2,500 officers were transferred to the army from the police [60]. In 1937, the 4-year army officer training program was halved and the number of officer candidates increased dramatically. If before 1933 there were 180-200 people a year, then in 1938 this number increased to two thousand [61]. In addition, veterans of the First World War began to be called up for military service, but there were still clearly not enough officers. That is why platoons in the Wehrmacht, as before in the Reichswehr, were commanded everywhere by sergeants, and the number of headquarters of units and formations was significantly smaller than in other armies of the world. Nevertheless, the high professional level of German commanders at all levels enabled them to successfully cope with their extensive duties.

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The creation of the Luftwaffe caused the transfer of 500 army officers there, which were already sorely lacking [62]. After the Anschluss of Austria, it seemed that there was an opportunity to somewhat improve the crisis situation with the command

AMD at the expense of Austrian officers. However, many of them had already reached a critical age by that time, so only 1600 Austrian officers out of 2128 were enlisted in the German service. Considering the total number of the Austrian army included in the Wehrmacht - 58 thousand people - the shortage of officers in the armed forces of the Third Reich only increased as a result of the merger with the Austrians [63]. There were always few officers in the Wehrmacht, they made up only about 3% of the total personnel of the land army. Thus, by the beginning of the Second World War, the German land army numbering 2,741,064 people had 81,314 officers [64]. The quality of training for officers who completed the reduced wartime program was noticeably inferior to the level of their colleagues with pre-war training. The German command was well aware of this and tried, first of all, to equip its strike formations with the best commanders. For this reason, regular officers made up half of the commanders in tank, motorized and mountain divisions. In the infantry divisions of the 1st, 4th, 11th and 12th waves of formation, they accounted for 35%, and in the other divisions - only 10% [65].

Blitzkrieg theory. The Wehrmacht became the direct heir to the Reichswehr and, naturally, adopted its advanced strategy and tactics. They differed significantly from those used during the First World War. Instead of a positional war with its many days of "gnawing through" the enemy defenses, when every piece of reclaimed space was paid for with great bloodshed, the German army was preparing for maneuverable combat operations. And it is no coincidence: Germany simply did not have sufficient resources, either human or material, to wage a long war of attrition under the conditions of a possible blockade, and even more so, a war on two fronts. Therefore, the strategy and tactics of the Wehrmacht were aimed at defeating their opponents one by one, and the defeat was so fast that they did not have time to get

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help from their allies. Particular attention was paid to achieving surprise attacks. The memorandum of the German High Command "Problems of organizing the leadership of the war" dated April 18, 1938 stated:

"The forms of unleashing war and opening hostilities change over time. The state, its armed forces and population are brought to a state of the highest possible mobilization readiness even before the publication of the mobilization order.

The element of surprise, as a precondition for quick and large initial successes, will often force the start of hostilities before the end of mobilization and even before the completion of the deployment of ground forces. For the first time, the Germans showed the whole world in practice how this is done in September 1939, when they attacked Poland. Exactly there

the new German strategy was dubbed a short but capacious word - "blitzkrieg", or "blitzkrieg" in German. Since then, the term has gained international prominence. The strategy of "blitzkrieg" in theory was clear and uncomplicated. Here are its main principles:

- from the very beginning of the campaign, without any buildup, suddenly bring down their main forces on the enemy;
- immediately seize the initiative and firmly hold it in their hands;
- inflict continuous powerful blows on the enemy, not allowing him to recover and take a breath;
- defeat and destroy the enemy army in the course of one fleeting campaign, without giving him time and opportunity to prepare new troops to replace it or receive HELP FROM YOUR ALLIES.

However, not every army will be able to successfully follow this, at first glance, a simple recipe. The Wehrmacht turned out to be capable of this because it was armed with advanced methods of conducting armed struggle, corresponding to the "blitzkrieg" strategy and perfectly worked out in practice. At first, this practice was exercises and maneuvers, and then it was the turn of those whom Hitler considered the enemies of Germany. The most important and indispensable prerequisites for the use of new methods at the tactical and operational levels were found that at one time

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I was introduced into the Reichswehr by General von Seeckt. First of all, we are talking about comprehensive training of troops and their close interaction, equipping them with effective weapons and giving them high mobility, speed of action and the highest rates of advance.

To get rid of the static front, it was necessary to break through the enemy defenses. The Germans achieved this by widely using the tactics of assault groups, developed by them during the First World War. Then mobile troops—tank and motorized units and formations—were brought into the gap that had formed. Their offensive was carried out with the continuous support of aviation, which suppressed pockets of enemy resistance directly on the battlefield. Tank formations broke through into the depths of the enemy defenses, not caring about their open flanks. The mobile formations moving behind the tanks had to take care of their cover, so the advancing groupings were in deep echelon. They did not allow the enemy to come to his senses, smashed his artillery, carts and headquarters, overturned reserves, disrupted command and control of troops, interrupted communications, destroyed warehouses, sowed confusion and panic around them, which quickly spread far around.

In the rapidly changing environment of highly maneuverable warfare, giving commanders at all levels maximum independence to carry out the task assigned to them and encouraging their initiative in every possible way played a decisive role in achieving success. The commanders had first of all to determine the key points (objects) on the battle (battle) field, and then find ways to master them. Unlike the battles of the First World War, this was achieved not by frontal displacement of the enemy from this position, but by decisive maneuver.

The main forms of maneuver for mobile troops were large-scale envelopment and detours. Their shock wedges formed giant pincers, which, closing up, locked the enemy troops caught between them in boiler traps. The outer front of the encirclement was usually created by moving Units, and the inner one by the infantry, which followed them as quickly as possible. Surrounded in cauldrons

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and cut off from all supplies, scattered enemy units and formations had only to surrender or perish. After that, the previously cohesive front of the enemy, as a rule, literally fell apart. It should be noted that the Germans managed to successfully solve the difficult problem of continuous artillery and air support for mobile troops, including advanced units operating in isolation from the main forces, as well as their comprehensive supply through a well-thought-out organization of the movement of rear columns. For this purpose, the directions of strikes were chosen on the terrain accessible for the advance of mobile formations, usually along highways with high throughput.

The main tool for the implementation of the German blitzkrieg became tank troops. The first tank training unit of the Reichswehr was formed at Zossen on November 1, 1933, just nine months after Hitler came to power. There were then only eight tanks and six more unarmed tracked chassis. For the purposes of conspiracy, it was originally called the "motorized training team", but | October of the following year, it was already openly renamed the | th tank regiment. By that time, the 2nd Tank Regiment had also been formed, which, like the 1st, had two tank battalions [67].

In July 1934, serial production of tanks began in Germany. But they were not sent to reinforce infantry units and formations, as was the practice at that time in other countries. The Germans from the very beginning understood the importance of massaging them in the most important directions. From the moment of their creation, tank troops were assigned an independent role, therefore, almost all battle tanks were included in independent mobile formations - tank divisions.

ziy. The exception to this rule were the five so-called "light" divisions. They were conceived as a kind of transitional link between cavalry and tank troops, but did not last long, only a year and a half, and all were reorganized into tank ones.

The first German Panzer Division began to form immediately after the promotion of the broad program

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German light tank P?2.1.Ai\$E.B

militarization of Germany at the beginning of 1935. Its backbone was a tank brigade consisting of two already existing tank regiments. In August of the same year, the newly minted division held its first full-scale exercise, in which 12,953 people, 4,025 wheeled and 481 tracked vehicles participated. Despite some minor hiccups, the exercises were quite successful. The new and never before tested mobile unit convincingly proved its right to exist, and on October 15 it was officially announced the beginning of the formation of two more tank divisions [68].

German light tank R7.P.Atsz EE

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The organizational structure of the German tank divisions was constantly being improved, taking into account the accumulated experience. The fact is that the effectiveness of their use depends not only on the number of tanks, which, of course, were their main striking force. Infantry, sappers and artillery, including anti-aircraft and anti-tank artillery, organically belonged to tank formations. Sometimes the importance and necessity of these components is underestimated. This is a fundamentally erroneous approach, because along with their undoubted advantages, tanks also have many disadvantages that prevent them from successfully operating independently. To fight against targets beyond the line of sight and destroy fortifications, tank units need constant support from artillery and aviation. Anti-aircraft gunners should cover them from enemy attacks from the air. Tanks are very vulnerable in close combat, especially in closed areas and in settlements, so the infantry must relentlessly accompany them in battle. Tanks can capture territory, but again, it is better to entrust the cleaning and holding of it to the infantry. And sappers make passages for tanks in natural obstacles and in enemy barriers. An integral part of the Wehrmacht's tank divisions were also anti-tank units that fought against enemy combat vehicles, enabling their own

tanks not to be distracted from their main tasks. The presence of all these components, provided they were fully motorized, greatly increased the effectiveness of Wehrmacht tank divisions. They could act autonomously, carry out swift and deep maneuvers and immediately engage in battle in full force.

The centralized use of tanks made it possible to solve the problem of their uninterrupted supply of ammunition, fuel and lubricants and spare parts, timely evacuation and repair in case of breakdowns and combat damage. Only due to the rapid commissioning of damaged combat vehicles did the Germans manage to maintain the combat capability of tank units and formations at an acceptable level in conditions of intense hostilities. Therefore, they paid great attention to the creation of an effective system for the maintenance and repair of military equipment.

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The creators of mobile troops in Germany realized early on the importance and necessity of equipping them with radio communications, without which their control and successful independent actions in battle and operations are impossible. To ensure effective interaction between combat vehicles, units, units and formations of the Wehrmacht, there was a sufficient amount of communication equipment. An undoubted role in this was played by a close acquaintance with the radio business of the main theoretician of the German tank troops - Guderian. At the beginning of World War I, as a young lieutenant, he commanded a mobile radio station in the German 5th Cavalry Division on the Western Front [69]. Based on his personal experience, Guderian insisted from the very beginning that every German tank be equipped with radio communications. Erich Felgiebel, his former brother-soldier, the chief of communications of the German army, helped Guderian to choose their characteristics correctly. It was he who, in 1934, was engaged in the selection of the main technical parameters necessary for the development of the first German specialized tank radio stations, in particular, their operating frequencies. Thanks to Felgiebel, German tankers got reliable, compact and convenient ultra-shortwave radios, while their opponents still relied on shortwave communications and optical signals.

Without exception, all German tanks were equipped with either transceiver radio stations, or only receivers. Transmitters were originally installed not on all tanks, but only on command vehicles. Therefore, in 1940-1942, only about 45% of German tanks had transmitters [70]. These were the tanks of company commanders, platoon commanders and their deputies, which were usually equipped with Ei5 VHF radios with a telephone (telegraph) communication range of 2-3 (3-4) km. Battalion commanders and their deputies used special command tanks equipped with more powerful

VHF radio stations Eib, which provided communication at a distance of 3-6 (4-8) km. The tanks of the commanders of regiments and divisions, as well as their deputies, except for Eib, had additional shortwave radio stations Ki with a range

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in motion - 10 km and places - 40 (telegraph - 25/70 km). To communicate with the aircraft, the air controllers used VHF radio stations Ri7 (range - 70/80 km).

Later, in order to strengthen the striking power of the tank troops and to make them easier to control, the tank divisions were consolidated into motorized corps, which also included motorized divisions. The latter were not armed with tanks, but due to the complete provision of vehicles and tractors, they were not inferior in mobility to tank divisions and were able to closely interact with them. It was the tank divisions and motorized corps, with massive and continuous air support, that were assigned the main, decisive role in achieving victory in the planned operations. Non-German tanks have become a real symbol of the "blitzkrieg". But not at the expense of some particularly outstanding fighting qualities. The main strength of the German tank forces was their personnel, well trained, comprehensively prepared, confident in themselves and in their equipment and led by outstanding generals.

The success of the Blitzkriegs, first in Poland, and then in the West and the Balkans, exceeded all expectations and instilled in the German leadership an illusory confidence in their own invincibility. Hitler recklessly decided that this so successfully tested strategy and tactics would allow him to defeat the USSR just as quickly, despite its vast expanses and inexhaustible resources.

## Chapter 2

### USSR UNDER THE GROWING THREAT OF WAR

#### MILITARY CONSTRUCTION IN THE USSR

In the USSR, the entire life of the state, including the construction of its armed forces, was subject to predetermined plans. Military plans have their own characteristics. For example, the plan for the development of the armed forces determines the path of development of the army and navy in peacetime. If necessary, the country switches from civilian life to military footing, guided by a mobilization plan that establishes the procedure for mobilizing and deploying the armed forces of the state in case



war. The work of the rear of the country, aimed at meeting the needs of the front, is also organized according to its own mobilization plan. The tasks for the armed forces are set by the political leadership of the country, which determines the initial conditions necessary for the development of military plans. These include, first of all, the country's ability to provide material support for the development of its armed forces.

Politicians determine both potential adversaries and possible allies. Detailed information about both is collected by intelligence, which should provide the political and military leadership of the country with information about the military and economic potentials of potential adversaries, their capabilities, intentions and the real degree of threat emanating from them, as well as assess the reliability of the allies and their possible contribution to common cause. We must not forget about the neutral countries, especially about the measures necessary for them to go over to their side or help them to keep Tralite, and, certainly, to prevent them from going over to the side of the enemy. The task of politicians is primarily

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to escape an armed clash, and if this is by no means possible, to create suitable conditions for the entry of one's army into it and unfavorable conditions for the enemy's army. And here it is of particular importance to determine the approximate dates for the start of a future war. The more precisely the developers of military plans know their enemies and allies, as well as the deadline for which it is necessary to be as prepared as possible, the closer to reality their plans will turn out, the more scrupulously and accurately they will be worked out, and the higher will be the likelihood of their successful implementation in practice. .

Tutmas came to understand the problems of the Soviet Union, which led to such difficult conditions for the beginning of its war with Germany. The constant leitmotif of the Soviet political leadership, which it instilled in the entire people of the country, was the idea of "the young Soviet republic surrounded by enemies." This was clearly stated by Lenin on December 23, 1921, in the report of the All-Russian Central Executive Committee and the Council of People's Commissars of the RSFSR to the 10th All-Russian Congress of Soviets:

"And the first commandment of our policy, the first lesson to be drawn from our government activity during the year, the lesson that all workers and peasants must learn for themselves, is to be on the alert, to remember that we are surrounded by people, classes, governments, which openly express the greatest hate for us. We must remember that we are always in the balance from any invasion" [71].

This idea was fully and completely preserved even after the end of the [Civil War and foreign intervention. On its basis, the most important political decisions were made and real economic developments were developed.

and military plans. The then Soviet views are perfectly illustrated by the wording from the secret military historical study "The Future War", written in 1928 by senior officials of the Intelligence Directorate of the Headquarters of the Red Army as a forecast for the scenario of a future war:

"The main factor that causes the inevitable involvement of us in a new war is the fact that the USSR is the only proletarian state on the globe that is implementing socialist

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construction under conditions of capitalist encirclement and playing the role of vanguard and bulwark of the international revolutionary movement.

At present, between the two camps into which the modern world has been divided, there exists a state of a certain unstable equilibrium, which we call a temporary "peaceful respite". The streak of this respite, in all probability, will not last very long; it will be replaced by an inevitable military clash between the capitalist world and the USSR.

This clash will most likely take the form of a new military intervention of the imperialists in the USSR. However, in the conditions of our epoch, there are also factors that can lead us to war, not only as a result of the imperialists attacking us. The course of history and the development of the revolutionary movement can cause our independent action to help those social forces which undermine the capitalist system and bring its final destruction (for example, in the event of a revolution in one of the major capitalist countries; the possibility of war is not excluded also in the event of a powerful upsurge of the revolutionary movement in one of the large colonial or semi-colonial countries)" [72].

As we can see, any possibility of preventing war and maintaining peace was completely rejected here. And who at that time was considered the enemies and allies of the Soviet Union? In response to this crucial question, the authors of the study divided the surrounding countries into four groups:

"Group 1 — states that are clearly hostile to the USSR: England, France, Poland, Romania, Finland, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania; Italy can also be included here, which, for reasons of its general policy, is ready to support the anti-Soviet plans of England.

2nd group - states that can join the anti-Soviet front: Germany, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, Greece, Belgium, Japan and the USA.

3rd group - states not interested in war

with us for geographical, economic and political reasons: Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Switzerland, Austria, Albania, Persia and Latin American countries.

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4th group - states that are friendly to us: Turkey, Afghanistan, China (potentially), the countries of the Arab East - Africa, Indonesia and British India (objectively), Mongolia" [73].

An attack on the Soviet state by an enemy coalition consisting of Poland, Rumania, Finland, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania with logistical and financial support from England, France, Czechoslovakia, and Italy was considered most probable. At the same time, it was expected that Germany, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Yugoslavia, Italy, Bulgaria, Greece and Persia would participate in the economic blockade of the USSR. The possibility of direct participation in the war of the British and French armed forces, as well as the armies of other major powers, was not ruled out. The main direction of aggression was supposed to be Ukraine with its coal, metal and bread to undermine the economic base of the Soviet Union in a long war of attrition. As we shall see, in the future this assessment of the most likely adversaries and their strategic goals remained largely unchanged until the very beginning of World War II. The most dangerous was considered the option of a simultaneous attack by Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Rumania, England (through the territories of Turkey, Persia and Afghanistan), the reactionary Chinese militarists and Japan. But this option, taking into account the likelihood of its implementation, was put in last place.

Of all the neighbors of the USSR, only Sweden, Norway and Denmark were considered neutral. With Afghanistan, our leadership hoped to maintain friendly neutrality. Turkey's position remained unclear. It was believed that the United States would not intervene in the war, but would support the Western European opponents of the Soviet Union with its loans and break economic ties with it.

The war scenarios described by the authors of the study had very little in common with reality. The supposed anti-Soviet coalition was in fact by no means monolithic. There were not only fundamental contradictions, but also serious conflicts between many of the countries that were part of it. First of all, Poland, which

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In the mid-30s, it was considered the main and most dangerous enemy of the USSR, considered Germany no less of an enemy than the Soviet Union. After World War I

some former German territories (the eastern part of Upper Silesia and part of Pomerania, forming the "Polish Corridor", necessary for Poland to enter the Baltic Sea), went to the Poles. Thus, East Prussia was completely cut off from the main territory of Germany. The Poles were well aware that the Germans would not put up with such a situation and sooner or later would try to return these lands back. Therefore, a significant part of the Polish army was forced to constantly cover its western border. Poland was also at enmity with Lithuania, from which it took the Vilna region back in 1920. Until 1938, these countries did not even have diplomatic relations, not to mention allied ones. And Poland did not get along with Czechoslovakia because of the Teszyn region: the Poles were convinced that they had more rights to it than the Czechs who owned it. Romania, too, had no time for new conquests, primarily concerned with holding Bessarabia, which she took from Soviet Russia in 1918, Transylvania, which Hungary seriously claimed, and southern Dobruja, which Bulgaria considered its own. The list of mutual claims and possible conflicts between countries that, according to the authors of the "future war", were preparing to attack the USSR with their combined forces or jointly participate in its blockade, can be continued. In addition, the mutual hostility of these countries forced them to constantly divert part of their already limited forces to cover their borders from dangerous neighbors. So the real danger of their joint actions against the USSR was, to put it mildly, greatly exaggerated by the authors of the study. They paid special attention to England, and here's why:

"The most hostile policy towards the USSR is pursued by the conservative government of Great Britain. It is the main initiator of anti-Soviet combinations" [74]. |

It was quite obvious to the Soviet leadership that Poland and Romania on their own, even in coalition with the Baltic countries, were incapable of achieving success.

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war with the USSR Therefore, it was in England that it saw that hostile force that could push them to aggression and help in its implementation. In addition, the mighty British fleet had the opportunity to directly threaten the vast Soviet coast, to conduct shelling, land troops, transfer, supply and cover fire to enemy troops. Meanwhile, England and France after the end of the First World War were most interested in maintaining the status quo. They were fed up with its horrors and hitherto unprecedented human, material and financial losses. For this reason, they did not have the slightest desire to conflict with anyone. In 1926, a memorandum from the British Foreign Office to the government frankly stated:

"We have no territorial aspirations or desire to expand. We got everything we wanted, and probably even more. Our only goal is to keep what we need and live in peace. <...> The reality is that war and rumors of war, hostility and conflicts in any corner of the world mean loss and damage to British commercial and monetary interests. <...> as a result of breaking the peace, in any case, we will be at a loss" [75].

In August 1919, the British government passed the "Rule of 10 Years" into law. According to him, the country's armed forces were to plan their annual budget on the basis that they would not have to participate in any major military conflict over the next 10 years. The "10-year rule" was regularly extended and was canceled only in March 1932, and even then with the condition that this cancellation should not serve as a reason for the growth of military spending, which during its operation were cut as much as 7.5 times. The leadership of the USSR, of course, knew about this publicly announced rule, but did not believe that it was being observed, and maintained a deep distrust of the British until the very moment of the German attack.

In 1927, events occurred that severely undermined the already fragile relationship between the two countries. First, on February 23, the British Foreign Minister, Chamberlain, sent a formidable note to the Soviet government.

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with a demand to immediately stop anti-English propaganda and military assistance to the Chinese Kuomintang. Then, on May 12, British police raided the premises of the Soviet-British joint-stock trading company Arkos in London and found secret documents that testified to the subversive activities of the Moscow-based Comintern in England and China. The complete rupture of diplomatic and trade relations with England that followed at the end of the same month was perceived in the USSR as an undoubted sign of the inevitable approach of British aggression.

In general, 1927 turned out to be rich in dramatic events in international life connected with the Soviet Union. Back in winter, the British newspaper The Manchester Guardian and the German newspaper Vorverts published a series of articles exposing the secret military cooperation between the USSR and Germany. In February, the squadron commander K.M. Klim flew on his plane to Poland [76]. In Warsaw, on June 7, the Beloemi Grant killed the Soviet envoy P.L. Voikov, and tension on the already turbulent Polish-Soviet border increased sharply. Finally, in October, the Soviet plenipotentiary Kh.G. was expelled from Paris. Rakovsky.

Everything that happened caused a mood in the Soviet Union, which was called the "military alarm of 1927". In sa-

At its beginning, the People's Commissariat for Military and Naval Affairs drew up an application for industry to supply the ammunition needed for the first year of hostilities. The application was made quite modestly: it was assumed that active hostilities would be conducted no more than half of this period, and ammunition consumption would not exceed the level of the last year [of the civil war. And then it turned out that the existing production capacity would provide only 29% of the army's need for shells and only 8.2% for cartridges [77]. For the Soviet leadership, it became obvious that the country was completely unprepared for any large-scale conflict. Under these conditions, in the same autumn, a year before the start of the first five-year plan, serious preparation of the economy for the coming big war began in the USSR.

The Red Army on January 1, 1927 consisted of 607,125 people. Maintain in peacetime more numerous

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the army at that time was not allowed by the state of the country's economy. In wartime, its number was planned to be increased to 3300-3400 thousand people. [78]. However, the country's poorly developed road network did not allow for the mobilization and concentration of forces on the western border in a short time. In order to cover the deployment of the army at the beginning of a future war, in January 1928 it was decided to build a chain of fortified areas on the western border. The first to be built was the Karelian fortified area, which defended Leningrad from the north. The construction of another 12 fortified areas on the western border was in full swing in the spring of 1931. They became the basis of the border defensive line, which later became known as the "Line of Sta

lina".

December 20, 1927 M.N. Tukhachevsky!, who then held the post of Chief of Staff of the Red Army, sent a memorandum "On the radical rearmament of the Red Army" to the People's Commissar of Defense Voroshilov. The title of the note accurately characterizes its content: it was a plan for a radical reorganization of the Red Army. According to the views of Tukhachevsky, by the end of the 1st Five-Year Plan, in 1933, the composition of the Red Army in wartime had to be increased to 260 rifle and cavalry divisions, as well as 50 divisions of high-capacity artillery and mortars [79]. The size of such an army would reach 5.8 million people. Here it is necessary to recall that according to mobilization plan No. 8 in 1928 in the Red Army, after mobilization deployment, it was planned to have 103 rifle and 12 cavalry divisions, as well as seven cavalry brigades and 16 artillery regiments of the RGK with a total strength of 2.9 million people, or exactly half as much [80]. However, modest material

Tukhachevsky Mikhail Nikolaevich (1893-1937). Member of the First World War, with the rank of lieutenant was taken prisoner (1915), fled to Russia (1917). In the Red Army since 1918, he worked in the Military Department of the All-Russian Central Executive Committee, since May - Commissar of the Moscow Defense District, Commander

he fought the 1st, 8th and 5th armies of the Eastern and Southern fronts. Having headed the Caucasian (1920), and then the Western (1920 - August 1921) front, he carried out a number of successful operations. He took an active part in the military reform of 1924-1925. From July 1925 Chief of Staff of the Red Army, from May 1928 Commander of the Leningrad Military District, from 1931 Deputy. People's Commissar of Defense and Chairman of the Revolutionary Military Council of the USSR, Chief of Armaments of the Red Army, since 1934 Deputy People's Commissar of Defense and Head of the Combat Training Department, Marshal of the Soviet Union (1935). Shot in 1937, rehabilitated in 1956.

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the possibilities of the USSR at that time were far from meeting the wide-ranging desires of the future marshal, so they were rejected as unrealistic.

In the spring of 1928, the Politburo of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks approved the following basic principles of the plan for the construction of the armed forces for the next five years, put forward by the Headquarters of the Red Army and Voroshilov:

"<...> in terms of numbers - not to be inferior to our potential opponents in the main theater of the war;

in terms of technology - to be stronger than the enemy in two or three decisive types of weapons, namely, in the air fleet, artillery and tanks" [51].

Thus, at the forefront was the achievement of quantitative superiority over enemies not in people, but in technology. However, Tukhachevsky, who was transferred in May 1928 to the post of commander of the LVO, continued to insist on his project for a sharp increase in the size of the army. On January 11, 1930, he sent Voroshilov another note on 14 pages, in which he developed the ideas of the previous one. This time, keeping the number of formations he had proposed unchanged, Tukhachevsky added a recommendation that the Red Army should have 40,000 aircraft and 50,000 tanks in wartime. Meanwhile, according to the Mob Plan No. 10 in force at that time, the Red Army was supposed to have only 1420 aircraft and 429 tanks [82]. This note provoked a serious discussion in the military and political elites of the USSR, the echoes of which can still be heard. In the heat of the controversy, Tukhachevsky's real point of view was subjected both then and later to considerable distortions, so it needs to be clarified. First of all, it should be noted that the astronomical amount of military equipment requested by Tukhachevsky testifies to his poor acquaintance with the actual state of affairs in the industry of that time. The Soviet government inherited the economy of tsarist Russia, which was largely undermined by the Civil War and subsequent devastation. She has just begun her development. The extensive production plans adopted at that time were chronically not carried out. By way of extreme

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tension of forces for the period 1930-1933. in the USSR, it was possible to build 9224 aircraft (both military and civilian) [83] and 7865 tanks and tankettes [84]. They produced exactly this amount of military equipment, not because they no longer wanted it, but primarily because they could no longer.

Characteristically, none other than their head, People's Commissar Voroshilov, tried to limit the exorbitant demands of the military. He then said to Tukhachevsky and his supporters:

"If you want to ruin the state and disgrace yourself, you organize so many tanks in the army in peacetime <...> This is a very expensive pleasure, on the one hand, but on the other hand, this is an unnecessary thing<...> This means eat everything that the state will give you, so that you will be hungry when the war comes" [85].

Most likely, Voroshilov really tried to save people's money. Although it must be borne in mind that in relations between him and Tukhachevsky, tension was constantly felt, caused by the conflict during the Civil War. But all the same, no one paid due attention to these rational considerations, and the arms race with imaginary opponents, ruinous for an already impoverished country, continued at full speed. Finally, on December 1, 1933, in the order of the Revolutionary Military Council of the USSR No. 0101 "On the results of the combat training of the Red Army for 1933 and tasks for 1934", the entire command staff of the Red Army was officially announced

revealed:

"Our Red Army really, in fact, became the first army in the world. Now, not only the moral and political properties of our army, determined by its class nature and the Marxist-Leninist education of the personnel, not only the size and successes in the combat training of the army, but also the powerful equipment of modern military equipment have made the Red Army the first and only army in the world. This is indisputable, this is an indisputable fact" [56].

But there was an undeniable rational grain in Tukhachevsky's dreams. For example, he proposed not to build specialized military factories, but to produce military equipment, relying mainly on conventional enterprises.

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At the same time, the capacities of the military industry in peacetime were to be partially used for the manufacture of civilian goods. Production of this type created real prerequisites for a sharp increase in the output of military products, if necessary. In addition, Tukhachevsky's note was about the production



tanks and aircraft in the context of a full-scale war in the Western theater. Then the entire Soviet industry would have been fully mobilized for the needs of the army. That is why he considered it possible to build such an astronomical amount of military equipment in the first year of hostilities.

At the same time, according to Tukhachevsky, only the tanks and planes of the first line should have been the latest models, and in the subsequent echelons it was enough to have the most simplified cheap substitutes for combat vehicles. For example, armored tractors were quite suitable for the role of tanks. Yes, and the number of tanks he proposed, Tukhachevsky did not take it out of the blue, as it might seem at first glance. Using the advice of engineer Magdesiev from the Bolshevik plant in Leningrad, he believed that the production of two tractors roughly corresponded to one tank. Therefore, based on plans for the production of 197,100 tractors in the USSR in the economic year 1932/33, Tukhachevsky considered it possible to build instead of them 100,000 tanks in the same time frame. Even in the event of the loss of half of them as a result of hostilities, by the end of the first year of the war, another 50,000 would have remained in the ranks [87]. He made a similar calculation for airplanes, and also taking into account their massive combat losses, only he was based on plans for the production of 350 thousand cars in the 1932/33 business year with a coefficient of 0.35. Thus, with a yearly production of 122,500 aircraft and the loss of more than two-thirds of them in combat, by the end of the first year of the war, 35-40 thousand of them should have remained [88].

Of course, Tukhachevsky used in his calculations, to put it mildly, overly optimistic coefficients. And the planned figures for the production of cars and tractors, on which it was based, did not correspond to reality. But it was a feature of Soviet planning

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that time. Enterprises were deliberately driven to the limits of obviously unrealizable production targets in order to squeeze everything possible out of them. Shturmovshchina with such methods of industrial management inevitably led to a drop in the quality of products. But then few people thought about this, everything was overshadowed by the magic of large numbers. Stalin, in a letter to Voroshilov dated April 24, 1932, justified this peculiar method of spurring the growth of production as follows:

"In terms of tanks and aviation, apparently, industry has not yet been able to properly rearm in relation to new (our) tasks. Nothing! We will press and help her, she will adapt. The whole point is to keep well-known branches of industry (mainly military) under constant control. They will adapt and will carry out the program, if not 100%, then 80-90%. Isn't that enough?" [89].

Tukhachevsky was a great admirer of the use of the latest technical means by the army. In order to carry out rapid mobilization and concentration of a multimillion-strong army in the western theater of operations (TVD) in conditions of an underdeveloped infrastructure, he proposed to make wider use of transport aviation for long-range military transport. However, apparently, he did not think about the question of how to prepare for the huge mass of military equipment planned by him the appropriate number of people who knew how to use it. But this problem is not inferior in complexity and importance to the problem of production, especially in such a backward country in terms of technical literacy of the population, which was then the Soviet Union. This time, Tukhachevsky's ideas were noticed and recognized by the top Soviet leadership. Stalin valued the mind, business acumen and desire of the young military leader for everything new. He could not expect such innovations from Voroshilov or Budyonny, who did not really strive, and could not accept many innovations. In June 1931, the future marshal was appointed to the high post of chief of armaments of the Red Army. At the same time, he became Deputy People's Commissar Voroshilov.

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Tukhachevsky's proposals just coincided with the new opportunities that arose in connection with the industrialization of the country in full swing and the emergence of a new serious enemy, which official propaganda began to highlight. At the Industrial Party trial, which was fabricated at the end of 1930, the immediate threat of an attack on the Soviet Union by France was publicly voiced. In this regard, in January 1931, a fundamental amendment was made to the basic principles of the plan for the construction of the armed forces: from now on, the Red Army should have surpassed potential opponents in the main theater of operations in all respects, and not only in two or three decisive types of weapons, as it was before.

The new mobilization plan for 1933, which ended the first five-year plan, provided for a one and a half times (compared with the previous plans) growth of the wartime army. It was planned to increase its composition to 150 rifle and 22 cavalry divisions, two mechanized corps and 10 mechanized brigades, which included 4467 thousand people, 20073 guns, 8463 tanks and tankettes, 979 armored vehicles and 3740 combat aircraft [90]. At the same time, the Red Army outnumbered the armies of Germany and France, which fought in 1918 in the Western theater of operations. In order to quickly saturate the troops with temporary equipment in 1932, the "Tank Program" was adopted. It provided for the production of 13,800 small and 2,000 medium tanks, as well as 15,000 tankettes in the first year of the war alone [91].

Of interest is the then planned distribution

troops in operational areas. The largest forces - six armies and two reserve corps - were allocated to the Western Front, which was supposed to confront the Polish army. It consisted of one mechanized corps, one cavalry corps, 56 divisions, 10 brigades and 19 artillery regiments of the RGC. The forces of the Southwestern Front consisted of five armies, and its reserve YOU consisted of a mechanized corps and four divisions. In total, this front had one mechanized and two cavalry corps, 44 divisions and two brigades with reinforcement units. Only two armies remained on the Northwestern Front, consisting of 26 divisions, three brigades and three artillery regiments of the RGK. These forces were assigned to action against

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armies of Latvia, Estonia and Finland. The mechanized corps stationed there was intended for transfer to the Western Front [92].

The Soviet Union also took care of naval weapons. In July 1931, at Stalin's suggestion, a program was adopted to build by the end of 1935 200 submarines, 40-50 destroyers, 250 torpedo boats, and a corresponding number of seaplanes with a total cost of two billion rubles [93]. For comparison: in the navy of the same Poland in 1933, the largest ships were two destroyers and three submarines. Before the start of World War II, two more destroyers and two submarines were added to them [94]. The adopted program meant the beginning of the rivalry between the USSR and the great powers at sea. But, given the then state of the Soviet economy, of course, it had no chance of being fulfilled.

At the end of 1929, the main countries of the West were seized by a severe economic crisis. He significantly weakened all their material and financial capabilities, including the ability to wage a big war with anyone. But the Soviet leadership preferred to turn a blind eye to this circumstance. Moreover, it was the crisis that justified the further growth of the mythical threat of an attack on the USSR. This point of view was voiced from the highest podium in the political report of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks, made by Stalin to the XV Congress of the Party on June 27, 1930. Stalin did not forget to mention there the then Soviet scarecrow - France:

"<...> every time when the capitalist contradictions begin to aggravate, the bourgeoisie turns its eyes towards the USSR: is it possible to resolve this or that contradiction of capitalism, or all the contradictions taken together, at the expense of the USSR, this Land of Soviets, the citadel revolution, <...> hindering the establishment of a new war, hindering the redistribution of the world in a new way, hindering the management of its vast domestic market, which is so necessary for the capitalists, especially now, in connection with the economic crisis.

Hence the tendency to adventurist attacks on the USSR

and to intervention, which (the trend) should intensify in connection with the unfolding economic crisis.

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The most striking expression of this tendency at the present moment is the present-day bourgeois France, <...> the most aggressive and militaristic country of all the aggressive and militaristic countries of the world" [95].

To the deafening accompaniment of anti-Western rhetoric, preparations for war in the Soviet Union were in full swing. According to the plans of the first five-year plan, the industrial base of the country was created, and in the first place, factories capable of producing military products. At the same time, Soviet importers took advantage of the difficult economic situation that prevailed all over the world at that time. Weakened by a long crisis of overproduction, Western firms were ready to fulfill Soviet orders in the shortest possible time and for a minimal fee, because at that time they often simply had no other opportunities to sell their products. At that time, Germany was one of the main suppliers of industrial equipment for Soviet enterprises under construction. In the second half of 1932, the USSR purchased from all German exports 50% of cast iron and steel, 60% of earth-moving equipment and dynamos, 70% of machine tools, 80% of cranes and sheet metal, 90% of turbines and forging and pressing equipment [96]. The multimillion-dollar Soviet orders were beneficial to the Germans to no lesser extent. After all, it was only thanks to them that many of their machine-building companies, which in the near future actively participated in the remilitarization of Germany, managed to avoid bankruptcy.

In September 1931, a real hotbed of a future great war began to mature in the Far East: Japan began the occupation of Manchuria. However, the threat in the Far East was then considered local. The forces of the Japanese land army at that time were limited, in 1930 it was armed with only 720 tanks, 600 aircraft, 1184 guns and 5450 machine guns [97]. In addition, the actions of the Japanese sharply reduced the risk of an attack on the USSR and its friendly Mongolia by the reactionary Chinese militarists, with whom they had already had to make war in 1929 on the CER. Yes, and relations between the USSR and Japan at that time were not bad, since 1927 there was even a hundred exchange program

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zherami between the officers of the armies of both countries. Therefore, before the start of the Japanese aggression in Manchuria, the USSR considered it sufficient to keep only about 5% of its peacetime army there.

In 1932, the USSR concluded non-aggression pacts with France, Poland, Finland, Estonia and Latvia. Such an agreement was signed with Lithuania back in 1926. Successes in diplomacy made it possible to remove tension on the Soviet western border. It was from the West that the leadership of the Soviet Union always expected the main danger to the very existence of the country, therefore, after its reduction, one could expect a decrease in defense efforts and spending on military purposes. But this did not happen, on the contrary, that year the share of military spending in the country's budget jumped more than 1.5 times, exceeding 15%. The goal of the second five years

ki became:

“To prepare such a development of the military-production base that would provide the Soviet Union with the superiority of weapons over the most powerful European adversary - France and its allies on our western border - Poland and Romania, especially in the main types of new military equipment - aviation, tanks and chemistry » [98].

Why such a goal was set is quite understandable. The Soviet leadership still did not have any doubts about the inevitability of a close war with countries that were previously recorded as mortal enemies. The non-aggression treaties with France and Poland did not shake this confidence in the least. At the same time, by 1938 the Headquarters of the Red Army planned to have sufficient industrial capacity to produce 74,000 aircraft, 85,000 tanks and 40,000 tankettes during the first year of the war alone. At that time, this headquarters was headed by A.I. Yegorov, but his application quite obviously echoed the recent proposals of Tukhachevsky. This time Voroshilov, who shortly before had severely criticized Tukhachevsky for his note, agreed with such astronomical figures. Yegorov's report to Voroshilov contained the main tasks of the second five-year plan for the construction of the Red Army:

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“<...> a) Consolidation of the first place in the world for the USSR in all decisive types of means of combat - aviation, tanks, artillery, on the basis of completing the technical reconstruction and rearmament of all its branches of the armed forces with modern military equipment.

6) In terms of its wartime scale, the Red Army must be able to fight against any coalition of world capitalist powers and inflict a decisive and crushing blow and defeat on the armies of these powers” [99].

In the draft report of the NPO “On the Development of the Red Army in the Second Five-Year Plan”, prepared for the USSR Defense Commission on December 12, 1933 and signed by the Chief of Staff of the Red Army Yegorov, all neighboring countries without exception were classified as the “probable closest opponents” of the Soviet Union.

the countries of the West, as well as the Near, Middle and Far East. According to the calculations made there, only Poland, Romania, Finland, Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia in 1938 could deploy armies with a total of up to 3.4 million people, 3000 aircraft and 2800 tanks. It was predicted that neighboring states in the West, South and Far East would be able to put up against the USSR in 1938 122 infantry and five cavalry divisions, seven infantry and 24 cavalry brigades, which would include 6.9 million people, 6600 aircraft and 6000 tanks [100]. Such frightening figures had nothing to do with reality, but it was they that substantiated the real plans for the development of the Red Army for the second five-year plan. But the report also warned of other threats:

“In addition, it must be taken into account that the immediate neighbors on the western border can receive active support from the large imperialist states (France, England) in the form of motorized mechanized troops and aviation in the very first period of the war with the USSR” [101].

Therefore, information about the armed forces of France and even about the "Anglo-Indian army" was also given there. The USSR was seriously preparing to fight with all its closest neighbors, who were enrolled as potential members

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anti-Soviet coalition. There was no mention of any allies. When calculating the forces of potential opponents, even the only tank company of the Afghan army was taken into account, and after all, quite shortly before that time, the authors of the aforementioned book "Future War" considered Afghanistan a friendly country.

For such a large-scale confrontation, by 1938 it was planned to increase the peacetime army to 92 rifle divisions and brigades, 22 cavalry divisions, six mechanized corps, 20 separate tank and mechanized brigades, and 53 air brigades. In the event of mobilization, another 68 rifle divisions were to be added to them. In the event of a war, a peacetime army of 850 thousand people was planned to be deployed up to 4.7 million, to which another 600 thousand were to be added during the first year of the war. For arming such an army, 18 thousand tanks were required, more than 50 thousand guns and 7.5 thousand combat aircraft [102].

Let's not forget that all these mountains of weapons were planned to be put into operation in five years, back in 1933, when direct threats to the Soviet Union were far-fetched and existed only in the imagination of its political and military leadership. About the real need for the hasty production of all this mass of military equipment

none of those in power then, unfortunately, did not think.

No one was particularly worried about the level of its quality in the conditions of exorbitant requirements, primarily to the growth of production. The possibility of its rapid moral obsolescence and excessive physical wear and tear by the time it might actually be needed was not discussed. All attention was paid to the speedy saturation of the troops with military equipment, but very little thought was given to the training of people capable of mastering it.

Characteristically, behind the exaggerated imaginary threats, the military leadership of the USSR managed to see the real danger: in Germany, the Nazis, led by Hitler, came to power. With such leadership [Germany began to quickly advance to the position of the most powerful and dangerous potential adversary of the USSR, which Poland had previously occupied. But Poland was by no means written off,

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it was just beginning to be read into the allies of Germany. The Soviet leadership, of course, knew about the irreconcilable contradictions between these countries, but nevertheless feared that they might still conspire against the Soviet Union. The exchange of the "Polish corridor" for jointly occupied Ukrainian lands was considered as a basis for such a collusion. Time has shown that there were not sufficient grounds for creating a German-Polish coalition against the USSR, because the long-standing deep antagonism between these countries significantly outweighed their common anti-Soviet interests. But the leadership of the Soviet Union, blinded by long-term hatred of Poland, did not realize this or did not want to.

to realize.

In March 1935, the regular strength of the Red Army in peacetime for the first time exceeded one million people. The very principle of its acquisition has also changed. Even earlier, starting in 1933, technical troops and cavalry began to turn into personnel. In 1935, the infantry also began to switch from the former, mainly territorial recruitment system, to a purely personnel one. This made it possible to noticeably improve the quality of combat training of personnel. Other important reforms were carried out to further improve the discipline and combat readiness of the troops. So, on September 26 of the same year, by order of the NPO of the USSR No. 144, personal military ranks were introduced in the Red Army instead of service categories [103]. In the period from 1936 to 1939, the draft age in the USSR was consistently reduced from 21 to 19 years. At the same time, the army continued to grow steadily, and by the beginning of 1938 the number of its personnel exceeded one and a half million people.

In addition to mobilization plans, of course, operational plans were also developed, according to which combat operations of troops were planned in the event of a war. After the end of the Civil War, the development of military plans was concentrated in the military districts. In 1924, the Headquarters of the Red Army was created, which became responsible for creating

nie and change the operational plan for a future war. Prior to the beginning of the Great Patriotic War, such a plan was developed and refined at least 15 times, i.e. almost annually. At the same time, not only the plan itself changed, but also its name.

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So, in 1924 it was called "On the strategic deployment of the Red Army in case of war in the West <...>", and in 1927 - "Note on the defense of the USSR" [104]. The importance and secrecy of this document is characterized by a more than eloquent fact: all these plans and even their copies were never printed anywhere, but only copied by hand by the executors themselves.

For a long time, the "Operational Plan", developed by the Headquarters of the Red Army under the leadership of Tukhachevsky in 1927-1928, was in effect. [105]. This plan was developed and refined as the mobilization plans of the Red Army changed, as its ranks and equipment grew, as did the international situation. In 1932, the operational plan of the Red Army included the main and additional options. The main plan was the war against Poland and Romania in the event of their attack on the USSR with the support of England and France. The additional plan assumed that the Baltic states would be added to the military opponents of the Soviet Union. But next year, at the direction of the Chief of Staff of the Red Army A.I. Egorov, the additional plan has already become the main one [106]. It is difficult to understand the logic of this decision, given that by this time non-aggression pacts had been concluded with all these states.

The need for a radically new operational plan for the war was ripe in 1935, after the start of the full scale militarization of Germany. In February of this year, the commander of the Belarusian Military District (BVO) I.P. Uborevich, with the support of Tukhachevsky, proposed to correct the current plan taking into account the new most likely opponents - the combined forces of Germany and Poland with the support of Finland. At the same time, he admitted that Great Britain, Estonia and Latvia could also attack the USSR [107]. Since September of the same year, the General Staff of the Red Army under the command of A.I. Egorov began to rapidly develop the "Plan for the Strategic Distribution of the Red Army and Operational Deployment in the West", approved by the country's top political leadership in the following year, 1936. According to him, it was expected that the main opponents of the USSR would be the combined forces of Germany, Poland,

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Estonia and Finland. Their likely allies were to be Romania and Latvia [108].

On March 24, 1938, another operational



plan developed under the guidance of the new Chief of the General Staff B.M. Shaposhnikov. The only copy of the plan was written by hand by himself. The composition of the alleged enemy coalition has changed there for the umpteenth time:

"<...> The Soviet Union needs to be ready for a fight on two fronts: in the west against Germany and Poland and partly against Italy with the possible accession of limitrophes to them, and in the east against Japan.

Italy will very likely take part in the war with her own fleet, while sending an expeditionary force to our borders can hardly be expected" [109].

The possibility of Turkish aggression with the aim of capturing Armenia was not ruled out. Romania's participation in the war was made dependent on the behavior of France. But the attack of the troops of the German-Polish bloc on Czechoslovakia and the offensive of their main grouping on Ukraine could have decisively influenced the position of the Romanians. The total forces of the enemy coalition were estimated at 157-173 divisions, 7,780 tanks and tankettes, and 3,135 aircraft, of which 120 infantry and 12 cavalry divisions, 7,500 guns, 6,300 tanks and tankettes, and 3,700 aircraft were expected on Soviet lines. Against them, the USSR was preparing to deploy in the West alone 106 rifle and 14 cavalry divisions, 20 tank brigades, 9466 guns, 8046 tanks and 4458 aircraft [110]. The basis of the concept of the Soviet plan was the strategic defense at the first stage, then the transition to the offensive. In which direction the main efforts of the enemy would be concentrated, north or south of the Pripyat marshes, Shaposhnikov hoped to determine no later than by the 10th day of mobilization. He believed that the northern option was preferable for the enemy. This plan was approved at a meeting of the Main Military Council on November 19, 1938 [111]. Thereafter, there was an unusually long pause in Soviet military planning, lasting nearly two years.

Usually, radical military reforms are started after defeats. This was the case, for example, in Germany. The reform of the Red Army by the People's Commissar for Military and Naval Affairs of the USSR M.V. Frunze began almost immediately after the end of the Civil War. The country was in ruins. The numerous army began to be reduced. But Frunze looked ahead. Unlike L. Trotsky, who believed that it was necessary first to put an end to lice in the troops, and only then to think about doctrine and military science, the People's Commissar for Military Affairs began to organize scientific conferences in the army. At that difficult time in the Red Army there was an unprecedented flourishing of military scientific thought. In the military

In the mainstream journals, sharp debatable articles were published that analyzed the experience of the First World War and the [Civil Wars. Now it is hard to imagine, but during these years even the works of white generals A.I. Denikin, P.N. Wrangel and Ya.A. Slashchev. The former tsarist generals A.A. taught at the academies and at various courses. Brusilov, A.A. Baltic (Andreev), S.N. Kamensky, P.P. Kan Shin, F.F. Novitsky, N.P. Sapozhnikov, A.E. Snesev and others. Moreover, the same Slashchev from 1922 worked as a teacher of tactics at the Shot courses in Moscow. Both winners and losers tried to figure out the reasons for victories and defeats. Military leaders, military historians and theoreticians turned to the problem of directing the war and large masses of troops. There were works on military history and theory, written by A.M. Zayonchkovsky!, A.A. Svechin and V.K. Triandafillova, which have retained their significance to this day.

Many of the former tsarist generals and officers who went to serve in the Red Army, at one time graduated from

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Zaionchkovsky Andrei Medardovich (1862-1926).

He graduated from the Academy of the General Staff (1888), in the Russo-Japanese War he commanded a regiment and brigade, in the First World War - a division and an army corps, general of infantry (1917). In the Red Army in 1919, Chief of Staff of the 13th Army, then was with the Chief of the Field Staff of the Revolutionary Military Council of the Republic, Professor of the Military Academy of the Red Army. Author of fundamental works on the history of the Crimean 1853-1856. and the First World Wars.

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Chile Nicholas Academy of the General Staff. This higher military educational institution was founded on November 26, 1832 in accordance with the project of Adjutant General Baron G.V. Jomini, who spent most of his life in the Russian service. They knew his works on the theory and history of wars well, and for the most part were followers of his views. Jomini is the author of numerous works on the theory and history of wars. The most famous among them are "Essays on the Art of War", which were published in Paris (1837) and in Moscow?. The most important provisions of military science, of which Jomini became the founder, were expounded by him in a small book, Military Art, published in Russian in 1807. Under the influence of Jomini, a scientific school of studying the history and theory of wars was formed in Russia. Among his followers are the names of N.A. Okuneva, G.A. Leer, N.V. Medema, D.A. Milyutina, A.A. Candle.

However, after the 1920s, the majority of Soviet theoreticians fell under the strong influence of the views of the Prussian general K. Clausewitz?. His cult was originally created by hands

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Jomini Henry Veniaminovich (Antoine Henri Jomin

(Logs!) (03/06/1779, Payern, Switzerland - 03/24/1869, Paris), baron (1807), military theorist and historian. From 1798 he served in the Swiss army, during the revolutionary wars - battalion commander (1801), from 1804 - French army volunteer, colonel (1805), chief of staff of the corps. brigadier general (1813), in August 1813 in Russian service, general of infantry (1826). He was in the headquarters of Emperor Alexander 1. Under Nicholas G, he participated in the development of military projects, in Tch. on the establishment of a higher military educational institution for officers to receive education - the General Staff, developed its charter (1832), in 1837 was appointed teacher of strategy to the heir. From 1855 he lived abroad.

her " Jomini G. Essays on military art. T. 2. - M.: Military Publishing,

Eg.

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Carl von Clausewitz (Sai Ryshrr Soyzeb yop Saizelig; 1.7.1780, Burg near Magdeburg - 11.16.1831) - a famous military writer and theorist. In the war with Napoleon he was taken prisoner (1806), in 1810-1812, he taught military sciences to Crown Prince Augustus of Prussia. From 1812 in the Russian service, he took part in the Patriotic War of 1812, in particular in the Battle of Borodino. In 1814 he returned to the Prussian army with the rank of colonel, was appointed chief of staff of the 3rd Army Corps (1815). Took part in the "Hundred Days" campaign. In 1818 he was promoted to major general. In 1831, during the action of the Prussian troops during the Polish uprising, he was chief of staff under Field Marshal Gneisenau; died in Breslau of cholera.

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German chauvinists and their agents at the Russian court on the basis of unbridled praise of his book "On the War", and uncritical perception of everything written by the author'. This is all the more unforgivable since the author himself, his widow, and other persons involved in the publication did not hide the fact that the author did not finish the book, and that the draft manuscript intended to be thoroughly improved. In Soviet times, pseudo-Marxist dogmatists reproduced the erroneous statement of V.I. Lenin, who singled out from the general context of Clausewitz's book his unoriginal phrase about "war as a continuation of politics by other, violent means." By the way, this formula of Clausewitz is not correct and not universal (in the book "On War" the author himself names wars that arose outside of politics). The Soviet leader, not considering himself a specialist in military affairs, naturally did not study the works of Clausewitz in depth. He uncritically accepted on faith the widely held among the then intellectuals, among whom were his ideological predecessors, K. Marx and F. Engels, the opinion about the "greatness" of the Prussian general. Lenin used this phrase in his fight against the reformists of the II International. Nevertheless, the leader's statement helped to strengthen Clausewitz's views among Soviet military theorists and their superiors.

A careful study of Clausewitz's main work, the GI book "On War", carried out by many analysts over the past 200 years, has shown that he largely represents the works of Jomini and other predecessors condemned by the Prussian general (of course, without links to them). A reader who is not familiar with the military historiography of those years may take Clausewitz's opus for science, especially since it also presents the scientific achievements of the works studied by the general. The book is full of contradictory and unproven judgments [112].

Clausewitz K. About the war (No. Kpere) M.: Gosvoenizdat, 1934

? In this connection, the thought of Langendorf is interesting: "The organic connection between politics and war, the mutual penetration of both elements was widespread in military writings in Prussia after 1815 and cannot be considered as belonging to Clausewitz" [113].

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The dispute between the two generals, who lived and worked at the same time, grew into a fundamental confrontation of methodologies. Jomini's work is an example of a scientific approach to all areas of military affairs. He considered the study of the history of wars to be the Laboratory of Military Theory. Jomini's teaching absorbed the achievements of many thinkers and commanders of the early millennia, everything written before him about wars and military skill, about historical science in general, from Sun Tzu to Suvorov and Napoleon. On this basis, Jomi did not create a scientific military theory, which was recognized by the entire scientific world of that time and confirmed by the military events of the XX-XX] centuries. His views formed the basis of the modern science of logistics: the UG chapter of the work "Essays on the Art of War" was called: "On Logistics or the Practical Art of Setting Armies in Motion." Jomini's judgments were distinguished by clarity, strict argumentation, attention to the conceptual apparatus, and simple, clear language. Jomini advocated expanding the sphere of scientific calculation on the eve and during the war, narrowing the sphere of probability and chance, and for the development of principles and rules.

Unlike Jomini, Clausewitz argued that wars are phenomena that do not recur; that "war is an area of chance", and thus expelled science from military affairs, frankly condemned "fascination with history". The Prussian generally considered any rules harmful. More precisely, as scientists mockingly noted back in the 20th century, Clausewitz accepts only his own rules, rejecting someone else's [114].

The work of Jomini presents the scientific methodology of research, the main scientific principles. This is an all-sided approach, historicism, comparative analysis, historical alternatives. Jomini formulated the concepts of "strategy" and "tactics", identified most of the most important

military principles, which will find their development in the "Essays on the Art of War". Among them: the concentration of the main efforts of the main forces of the army "on the decisive points of the theater of war" at a decisive moment; "the masses are not only present at the decisive point," but are also "energized into battle" (at the same time, Jomini warned against the concentration of "surplus masses"); "shock - only an offensive can ensure victory, a war must be" mobile ", defense

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on - "active", "offensive". Jomini wrote that the retreat is "undoubtedly the most difficult military operation" ("the reward for a skilful retreat, as well as for the most brilliant victory").

Jomini attached great importance to the reserves, both on the scale of the state and the army (up to and including a platoon!), especially their training and education, having developed many aspects of this problem. Clausewitz, on the contrary, in a special chapter of his work "Strategic Reserve" called this very idea "absurd" and declared the allocation of reserves "a wasteful expenditure of forces." A.E. Snesarev, as a result of a deep study of Clausewitz's book "On War" in 1924, came to an important conclusion about the poor theoretical preparation of the Prussian. "As a historian," Snesarev noted, "Clausewitz is too biased or too despotic analyst <...>. In a number of his works "we do not find documents, confirmations, actual proofs; <...> powerful analysis captivates Clausewitz, without arousing in him doubts or the need for extraneous checks <...>". However, a scientist free from doubt is not a scientist at all. Clausewitz misunderstands theory. He writes only about what should not be "do, and is extremely stingy with positive instructions"! [115]. However, contrary to his very qualified analysis, Snesarev gave a generally positive assessment of Clausewitz's work.

Jomini considered the interaction of combat arms to be an important principle; seizing and retaining the initiative ("to have the initiative <...> of movements on one's side"): "fidelity of assessment and calculations; introducing "the enemy into mistakes" (maneuver and disinformation): moderation in victory ("the ability to stop in time"); the conformity of the army's goals with its forces and means. Jomini strongly condemned adventurism, linking the importance of intelligence to it: "a good intelligence service and a thorough knowledge of military geography are prerequisites for a qualitative strategic assessment of the situation and planning." Jomi highly appreciated Napoleon's military leadership, emphasizing his idea that "the situation reigns on the battlefield", that decisions should be made taking into account the momentary general discussion.

' Review by Snesarev A.E. was published in 2007

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settings. But he also criticized his idol for excessive aggressiveness and inability to stop there.

The differences between the views of Jomini and Clausewitz are of a purely fundamental nature, they cannot be reduced to any particulars. Thus, Jomini believed: if mankind cannot give up wars in general, let them limit their scale and duration to the utmost in order to save human lives, their own and those of the enemy. Clausewitz was far from it, he scolded "pacifists" and "philanthropists". Fearing to fetter the initiative of the commanders, he removed from them the responsibility for combat losses in advance, proclaiming "absolute", i.e. unrestricted war with its principle - "victory at any cost."

A well-known major Soviet military scientist A.A. Svechin', who made a considerable contribution to the development of military theory, back in the 1920s. noted with good reason: "For a century, the military thought of the whole world, bowing before Clausewitz, lived mainly on the ideological heritage of Jomini" [116]. In the history of the Patriotic War, one can find many examples when the violation of the principles of strategy and tactics developed by Jomini, the retreat from them led to major setbacks and defeats.

A.A. Svechin in 1918-1921. he headed the Military Historical Commission for the study and use of the experience of the war of 1914-1918, at the same time, as a professor at the Academy of the General Staff of the Red Army, he taught strategy and military history there. "He left behind a great military-historical and military-theoretical legacy. A special his capital works "Strategy" (1923), "Evolution of military art" (1927) and "Strategy of the twentieth century at the first stage" (1937) gained fame. Svechin was not afraid to openly express his views, which often stuyu did not coincide with the views of the authorities. In 1930, he

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Svechin Alexander Andreevich (1878-1938). Member of the Russian-Japanese and World War I, major general (1916). He commanded a regiment, a division, and from May 1917 became the chief of staff of the 5th Army. In the Red Army since March 1918, since November, professor at the Academy of the General Staff of the Red Army. The author of works on military history, strategy and tactics, in which he summarized the experience of wars at the end of the 20th - beginning of the 20th century. Shot in 1938, rehabilitated in 1956.

The Military Historical Commission was established on August 13, 1918.

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was subjected to a short-term arrest, and the next year he was arrested again and sentenced to 5 years. Fortunately, this time he survived, spending only half a year in the camp, and after that he even managed to return to military service.

Unfortunately, the usual controversy between supporters of certain views on the development of military affairs at that time was often characterized by intolerance of dissent, and sometimes even went far beyond the scope of ordinary disputes. Their sharpness was aggravated by the conflict of group ambitions, especially when the opinions of senior officers and generals of the tsarist army clashed with the poorly educated heroes of the Civil War. In such cases, scientific argumentation was often replaced by purely ideological assessments and undeserved labels. Instead of evidence, they used, as they would say now, an administrative resource. So, at one of the discussions in 1930, Tukhachevsky said: "Svechin did not write to prepare for the victories of the Red Army. His book is the defense of the capitalist world from the offensive of the Red Army" [117]. So, no more, no less... It should be noted that just at that time Svechin was in a prison cell and could not stand up for himself. It is possible that personal reasons played a certain role in these unfair attacks. Svechin, in his writings and conversations, repeatedly noted the major strategic miscalculations of the commander of the Western Front, Tukhachevsky, during the attack on Warsaw in 1920, which ended in a major defeat for the Red Army.

It is often reproached that generals are always preparing for the last war. But Svechin could not imagine how one could talk about a future war in isolation from the past. He spoke of the possibility of foreseeing the nature of future wars and warned against pernicious underestimation of the role of strategic defense. But it turned out that the theory of deep combat and operations obscured for our army the development of the problems of defense, mobile warfare, counter operations, and complex issues of forced and deliberate withdrawal. In the end, the idea of "strike back" became the core of the war plan instead of the more appropriate idea of strategic defense for our army. Svechin argued that "the right to attack still needs to be earned. Only successful operation

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hundreds of divisions on all fronts will allow four dozen to deliver a lightning strike in the chosen direction and achieve an unconditional victory" [118].

Being a comprehensively educated person with extensive knowledge in the field of strategy and tactics, backed up by vast practical experience, Svechin made amazingly accurate forecasts of the scenario for a future big war. Thus, he predicted that the main goals of a potential aggressor would be political, so the main blow would be delivered to Moscow along the shortest route through Belarus, and not to Ukraine with its numerous economic centers. It was in the Moscow direction that he proposed to concentrate the main forces of the Red Army for a decisive battle with the enemy. When defending the south of the country, Svechin suggested not to cling to the Right-Bank Ukraine (not

it is worth forgetting that it was then about its old borders), and immediately withdraw beyond the Dnieper and use this large natural obstacle as the main defensive line. At the same time, he urged to prepare in advance for the possible forced abandonment of vast areas of the western part of the USSR to superior enemy forces. In this regard, he proposed to urgently develop a powerful industrial base in the deep regions of the country, which would make it possible to win a long war of attrition. Being well versed in the economics of modern warfare, Svechin emphasized in this connection the importance of the most efficient use of the state's limited resources, especially during a prolonged armed struggle. Svechin's extraordinary talent, independent character, sharp tongue and directness made him many envious and enemies in his life. Under the conditions of mass repressions, the very existence of an independent scientist was impossible. December 30, 1937 Assistant Head of the Department of Military History of the Academy of the General Staff Professor A.A. Svechin was again arrested on false charges and this time shot.

In the late 20's and early 30's. military theory in the USSR was far ahead of the pace of development of the troops and their real material capabilities. Under these conditions, a particularly noticeable contribution to its development was made by a young, but competent and energetic

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ny practitioner and theoretician of military affairs V.K. Triandafillov. Frunze nominated the 30-year-old commander to the most responsible post of head of the operations department of the Red Army Headquarters. Triandafillov fully justified the trust placed in him. In addition to performing those daily tasks, he wrote a number of articles on military-historical and military-theoretical topics. They not only summarized the experience of the First World War and the Civil War, but also developed practical recommendations on military planning, development and organization of the armed forces of the USSR for the future. The main outcome of the work. Triandafillova became the advanced theory of "deep operation". She had much in common with the ideas of von Seeckt. Just like this German innovator general, Triandafillov tried to find ways out of the severe "positional crisis" that all the armies participating in the First World War, without exception, faced unexpectedly. Then, for the first time, a no man's land, shot through with countless machine guns and shrapnel, entangled in thick rows of barbed wire, became an insurmountable obstacle to the advancing troops. Many kilometers of front lines were frozen in immobility along their entire length. Even a slight advance had to be paid with many thousands of lives. Such a price was clearly unacceptable, so the search began for qualitatively new effective methods and methods of conducting military operations. The most famous work of Triandafillov was the book "The nature of the operations of modern armies", published in 1929. It absorbed all his thoughts and findings, designating



la new prospects for the development of the operational art of the troops and theoretically substantiated further ways of modernizing and developing the Red Army. The concept of a deep operation ' Triandafillov Vladimir Kiriakovich (1894-1931). A participant in the First World War, he started as a private, and ended up as a captain, a battalion commander. In the Red Army since 1918, commanded a battalion, regiment and brigade. In 1923 he graduated from the Military Academy of the Red Army. In 1923-1931. head of department, and then head of the operational department of the Headquarters of the Red Army, commander and commissar of arrows

Corps, Deputy Chief of Staff of the Red Army. Author of many military-historical and military-theoretical works. Died in aviation

noah disaster. 92

consisted in breaking through the enemy's defense to its entire depth and further developing success by introducing a mass of mobile troops into the breakthrough - tanks, motorized infantry and cavalry, which went into operational space. Their actions were to be supported by aviation, and airborne landings were planned behind enemy lines in order to defeat his reserves. Due to this, high rates and a large depth of the offensive were ensured, which did not allow the enemy to come to his senses and organize effective countermeasures. At the same time, several simultaneous breakthroughs were to be carried out simultaneously in the front line, leading to the complete collapse of the entire defensive system of the enemy. The depth of the front offensive operation was planned to be 150-200 km, and its pace was to reach 15 km per day [119]. Deputy Head of the Department of Mechanization and Motorization (UMM) of the Red Army K.B. Kalinovsky!, being a consistent supporter of Triandafillov, developed the theory of a deep operation, adding to it the provision on the use of groups of medium and heavy tanks to solve independent tasks in developing the success of breaking through the enemy defenses. On his initiative, a mechanized brigade was created in May 1930 as the first formation of this kind. Kalinovsky was well acquainted with the German theoretical developments at the Kama tank school and used them to substantiate the creation of large mechanized formations in the Red Army. VC. Trian Dafillov and K.B. Kalinovsky were close associates and like-minded people. They were young, talented and could still achieve a lot in life. But on July 12, 1931, an absurd tragedy cut short their lives: not far from Moscow

Kalinovsky Konstantin Bronislavovich (1897—

1931). Member of the First World War, served as a volunteer in the artillery. In the Red Army from 1918, in 1920 he commanded an armored train house on the Western Front. In 1921-1922. Inspector of the Armor Department of the Caucasian Army. In 1925 he graduated from the Military Academy of the Red Army. In 1926-1927. military adviser in China, then commanded an experienced

mechanized regiment. From 1929 he was an armored inspector and deputy head, and from February 1931 head of the Department of Mechanization and Motorization of the Red Army. Died in a plane crash.

After the death of K.B. Kalinovsky, this mechanized brigade was named after him.

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the plane in which they flew, at low altitude in the fog, clung to the trees ...

M.N. Tukhachevsky, together with other Soviet theoreticians, also did a lot to develop the theory of the "deep operation" and introduce it into the practice of the troops. He has a great merit in the technical re-equipment of the Red Army and the improvement of the organizational structure of its units, units and formations. He also contributed to the development of new types and types of troops, such as tank, motorized and airborne. Tukhachevsky and other theoreticians, who, along with him, adhered to a purely offensive strategy, drew the basically correct conclusion that the future war would be primarily of a class character. At the same time, being too politicized people (which was typical of that time), they believed that the majority of the working population of the countries with which the USSR would have to fight would begin to treat the Red Army as their liberator. And the armies of its opponents, deprived of the support of their people, will inevitably suffer a crushing defeat. Although who, if not Tukhachevsky, was not to know what kind of rebuff his troops received from the Poles in 1920, when the newly acquired independence of their state was called into question. Nevertheless, the leaders of GlavPUR placed serious hopes on the revolutionary action of the workers of Germany against Hitler after his attack on the USSR. Even a few months after the start of the war, when on October 2, 1941, the Germans went on a decisive offensive with the aim of capturing Moscow, the aviation of the Western Front dropped leaflets instead of bombs on the enemy troops!

Further development of the theory of a deep offensive operation required the creation of independent formations of mobile troops, which could build on the success of breaking through the tactical defense zone into an operational one. For this role, the tank troops of the Red Army were most suitable. Initially, the main task of the tanks of the Red Army was the direct support of the infantry and cavalry in battle. Tank subunits were supposed to be included in the rifle and cavalry units and formations or kept in the reserve of the High Command for use on decisive

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shchie sections of the front. In the autumn of 1932 were formed

the first two mechanized corps, each consisting of two mechanized and one rifle-machine-gun brigade. The corps also included reconnaissance, chemical and engineer battalions, a communications battalion, an anti-aircraft artillery battalion, a regulatory company and a technical base [120]. In 1934, two more mechanized corps were added to the first two, one of which was deployed on the basis of the brigade named after Kalinovsky. In addition to them, in 1932, five separate mechanized brigades were formed, the number of which was increased to 14 by 1935. In 1938, there were already 26 mechanized and armored brigades in the Red Army, and seven more tank and reserve tank brigades.

The rapid saturation of the Red Army with tanks was accompanied by inevitable growing pains. Unfortunately, the most difficult problem of training a sufficient number of people capable of mastering the new technology to perfection was underestimated. In contrast to production, for which no money was spared, funds for combat training were allocated meager. Thus, each tank was allowed to spend only 25 hours of engine life per year, of which only 15 hours were allocated for tactical training, and the remaining 10 hours were allocated for participation in parades [121].

In addition to the individual training of many thousands of tankers, it was necessary to prepare their commanders, who had to comprehend in theory and practice the art of driving their units, units and formations, learn how to organize close interaction between them, as well as with units and subunits of other military branches. . No less important were the issues of organizing combat, technical and logistic support for the combat operations of tank units and formations. All these complex problems were obviously underestimated, and their solution was postponed until later.

It should be emphasized that the organizers of the Soviet tank forces early appreciated the importance of equipping tanks with radio communications. Already in 1929-1930. Chika's transceiver was installed on four domestically produced MS-1 tanks and on captured tanks - two French Renault ET-17s and five English MK.U.s, which were called "Ricardo" in the Red Army after the name of their engine. More

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16 MS-1s received radios. However, the development of modern means of communication in Warmia clearly did not keep pace with the rapid growth of its ranks. The lack of radio stations was not the only misfortune, because even the existing ones were often not used. Many radio operators had unacceptably low qualifications, so they simply could not really master the equipment that was too complicated for them and, as a result of inept operation, quickly disabled the radios or their power supplies. There were also cases of deliberate breakdowns of radio stations by tankers who tried to hide their own illiteracy by referring to the poor quality of the equipment entrusted to them. At the same time, qualified

There was an acute shortage of radio equipment repairmen.

A feature of the Soviet radio-equipped tanks produced in the 30s was the installation of a handrail antenna on their turret. It was clearly visible from afar and immediately betrayed command vehicles. The experience of fighting in Spain, at Khasan and Khalkhin Gol showed that the enemy first of all tries to disable tanks with antennas and thus deprive the tankers of control. Therefore, in 1939, it was decided to remove the handrail antennas from all tanks and replace them with whip antennas, which had both less visibility and lower cost. But before the start of the war, this important event was not fully implemented.

At the turn of 1938-1939, tank troops were reorganized: the number of tanks in tank platoons was increased from three to five, and the number of tanks in brigades increased accordingly. The mechanized corps were renamed into tank corps, and the number of tanks in their composition increased from 463 to 658 (in the state: 560 combat and 98 training) [122]. Two of the then existing four corps took part in the Polish campaign of 1939.

The Soviet military theory of the prewar years, expressed in works, lectures, educational developments, basically corresponded to the requirements of its time. But she developed on her own. In the combat training of troops and staffs, only one, unified point of view, approved by the highest authority, was taken into account, no other options were recognized. Many conclusions and recommendations of scientists have not been implemented in the practical training of the armed forces and

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the whole country to a future war. After the revelations of numerous "enemies of the people", many works of prominent Soviet military theorists, especially those who were repressed, were generally banned.

## PERSONNEL PROBLEMS OF THE RED ARMY

Lack of material resources and shortcomings of a technical nature were by no means paramount problems in the pre-war Red Army. The situation with the training of personnel of the troops was much more serious. This problem was associated with the low educational level, which was then typical for most of the population of the USSR. In 1939, only 7.7% of its inhabitants completed at least seven or more classes, and only 0.7% had higher education. In men aged 16–59 years, these figures were noticeably higher, 15% and 1.7%, respectively, but still remained unacceptably low [123]. This led to an acute shortage of competent specialists, especially among the technical branches of the military.

But what can we say about ordinary specialists, when there were actually no full-fledged junior commanders in the Red Army. In the armies of other countries, they were called non-commissioned officers or sergeants and, in essence, were the backbone of the army, making it disciplined, stable and combat capable. In the Red Army, they differed little from ordinary soldiers in their education, training, and experience. To perform functions that in other armies were entrusted to non-commissioned officers or sergeants, in the Red Army it became necessary to attract middle-level commanders. In addition, the poor training of the then paint committees and, accordingly, the low efficiency of their work had to be compensated for by an increase in the staff of command and command personnel, taken, as they say, in number. Therefore, for example, in the management of the pre-war Soviet rifle division there were three times as many officers as in the modern German infantry division. And this despite the fact that the German division then consisted of 16% more personnel than the Soviet one. As a result, a paradoxical situation has arisen.

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tion: despite the large number of red commanders (by June 1941 - 659 thousand), the Red Army is constantly using  
tortured the shortage of command staff relative to the staff.

In 1939, there were six privates for one commander of the Red Army. At the same time, there were 29 in the Wehrmacht, 15 in the English army, 22 in the French, and 19 in the Japanese [124]. For the most part, the red commanders were not distinguished by the volume and high quality of knowledge. Yes, this is understandable, because they often had to start their development of their chosen specialty without having the necessary base for this. In 1929, 81.6% of the cadets admitted to the military schools of the ground forces came there with only a primary education. In infantry schools there were even more of them - 90.8%. Over time, the situation began to gradually improve, but very slowly. After 4 years, the proportion of cadets with primary education decreased to 68.5%, but in armored schools it still amounted to 85% [125].

This was explained not only by the low average level of education throughout the USSR. The consistent policy pursued in the country to provide advantages for admission to study to people from workers and peasants also played its negative role. A proletarian or peasant origin served as a pass to educational institutions, but in no way could replace the necessary knowledge for future commanders and educators of soldiers. Semi-literate cadets had to be taught, first of all, elementary things. Time for this was spent by reducing the hours for vocational training. The urgent need to eliminate illiteracy was faced not only by cadets of military schools, but also by many students of military academies.

But even such graduates were sorely lacking in the army.

On the eve of the war, only 7.1% of the commanding officers of the Red Army could boast of a higher military education, 55.9% had an average, 24.6% had accelerated courses, and the remaining 12.4% received no military education at all [126]. Most of the commanders did not have a military education or received their rank after completing short-term courses. There were 37% of such commanders in the entire pre-war Red Army. But among the average

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commanders, from junior to senior lieutenants, their share was much higher. And they, commanding platoons, companies and battalions, directly trained the fighters and prepared them for future battles. It was on them that the real level of combat readiness of their units largely depended. At the same time, they themselves had a lot to learn.

The same was said in the "Act on the reception of the People's Commissariat of Defense of the USSR Comrade. Timoshenko S.K. from comrade Voroshilov K.E.", prepared in May 1940:

"The quality of command staff training is low, especially at the platoon-company level, in which up to 68% have only a short-term 6-month training course for junior lieutenant" [127].

Of the 915,951 army and navy reserve commanders registered, 89.9% had only short-term courses or no military education at all [128]. A clear illustration of the unacceptably low level of knowledge of Soviet commanders is the following sad fact: about a quarter of them did not know how to use an ordinary map and compass at all. Such a depressing situation with educational baggage has developed on the lower rungs of the Red Army service ladder.

Even among 1,076 pre-war Soviet generals and admirals, only 566, or slightly more than half, received a higher military education. At the same time, their average age was 43 years, thus, they also did not have much practical experience. The situation was especially sad in aviation, where only 14 out of 117 generals had a higher education. As a result, none of the commanders of the aviation corps and divisions had it [129].

However, the system of military education itself suffered from many shortcomings. There were quite a few military educational institutions in the prewar USSR: 19 academies, 10 military faculties at civilian universities, 278 colleges and schools, 68 advanced training courses for commanders. Over 300,000 people studied there at one time. But there was an acute shortage of qualified teaching staff for them. Thus, Air Force schools had teachers 44.1% of

state. The material base of these schools was also far from meeting the requirements of the educational process. For example, they were provided with fuel for 41.4% of their needs [130]. But at the forefront was the task, first of all, to provide the rapidly growing army before the war with commanders as soon as possible. The quality of their training was considered a matter, if not secondary, then acquired.

The personnel problem of the Red Army was undoubtedly aggravated by the pre-war mass repressions organized with the knowledge and on the initiative of Stalin. People's Commissar of Defense K.E. Voroshilov'. He was among the instigators of the reprisals against the highest command staff of the Red Army under the guise of liquidating the so-called "military-fascist conspiracy" (the case of M.N. Tukhachevsky, I.E. Yakir, I.P. Uborevich and others). Stalin knew that the command staff of the army was divided into supporters of Voroshilov and Tukhachevsky. Many leaders of the highest levels of government, who went through the crucible [of the Civil War, knew the true value of the same Voroshilov as a military leader, and were not afraid to express their opinion about the people's commissar. To eliminate the split in the military leadership, Stalin had to make a choice between the personal loyalty of his old comrades-in-arms and representatives of advanced military science. Stalin chose the first.

There are numerous, albeit often very contradictory, reports and opinions about the scale and consequences of repressions in the army and navy. For maximum objectivity, we will try to rely on the most reliable information. It is contained, for example, in the report of E.A. Shchadenko "On work for 1939" dated May 5, 1940. According to him, in 1937, 18,658 people were fired from the Red Army alone without the Air Force,

Voroshilov personally approved the lists submitted by the NKVD to arrest generals and senior commanders (his signature is on 186 arrest lists for 18,474 people). In 1961, Voroshilov addressed a letter to the 21st Congress of the CPSU, in which he once again acknowledged his mistakes and his participation in the organization of repressions.

Marshals of the Soviet Union. Front row: M.N. Tukhachevsky, K.E. Voroshilov, Egorov; behind S.M. Budyonny, V.K. Blucher.

or 13.1% of the payroll of its command staff. Of these, 11,104 people were dismissed for political reasons, and

another 4,474 were arrested. In 1938, the number of those dismissed amounted to 16,362 people, or 9.2% of the payroll of the command staff that had grown by that time. Of these, 7,718 were dismissed for political reasons, and another 5,032 were arrested. In the following year, 1939, the scale of repressions dropped sharply; only 1,878 people were fired, which corresponded to 0.7% of the payroll of the command staff that continued to grow. Of these, 284 people were fired for political reasons, and 73 were arrested. Thus, over these three years, only the ground forces out of 36,898 dismissed lost 19,106 people for political reasons, and another 9,579 people were arrested. It turns out that only direct losses from repressions and only in the ground forces of the USSR reached 28,685 people. The reasons for dismissal for another 4,048 people during the same period were drunkenness, moral decay and theft. The remaining 4165 people were excluded from the lists of the army due to death, disability or illness [131].

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Meanwhile, the situation with commanding cadres in the Red Army was becoming more and more critical. In 1938, the shortfall of the command staff reached 34% of their regular strength. Only the cadre army lacked 93,000 commanders, and much more reserve commanders were needed - 300-350 thousand [132]. Under these conditions, repression began to decline, moreover, in 1937-1939. 11,178 people were rehabilitated and reinstated in the army, of which 9,247 were dismissed for political reasons and 1,457 were arrested. Consequently, the irretrievable losses of the Soviet ground forces from repressions over these three years amounted to 17,981 people [133]. But not all of them were physically destroyed. According to the well-known historian, Doctor of Historical Sciences. O.F. Suvenirov, who devoted many years to studying this issue, as a result of repressions in the prewar years, about 10 thousand people of the command staff of the Red Army died [134]. Is it a lot or a little? Comparison of the named number with the total payroll of the command and political staff shows that only an insignificant proportion of all commanders and political workers was lost. But if we sort the repressed by rank and position, we will see a completely different picture.

The most severe repressions affected the top command cadres of the Red Army and the Navy, its most qualified, experienced and educated unit. Take, for example, the two most severe years in terms of repression, 1937 and 1938. During this period, only three junior lieutenants and persons corresponding to them in rank were arrested, and the same number of marshals of the Soviet Union. The arrest of three of them had practically little effect on the total number of junior lieutenants of the Red Army. But of the marshals who served in the Red Army in 1936, 60% were arrested. At the same time, 14 army commanders of the 1st and 2nd ranks were arrested, which corresponded to 100% available for September 1936, 84 commanders, or 135.5%! their presence in 1936.



For division commanders, these figures were 144, or 71.6%, for brigade commanders - 254, or 53.6%, for colonels - 817, or 47.7%,

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The number of arrested commanders exceeded 100% because those of them who were awarded this title after the start of repressions were also arrested in 1937-1938.

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for majors - 1342, or 24.4%, for captains - 1790, or 12.5%, for senior lieutenants - 1318, or 5.1%, and for lieutenants - 1173, or 2.0% [135]. It should be added that all these figures include persons who bore the ranks corresponding to the above, but do not take into account the political composition and those arrested who in 1939 managed to be released and reinstated in the army. The far from complete list of political personnel repressed in 1937-1938 includes 14 army commissars of the 2nd rank, 27 corps commissars, 72 divisional commissars and 110 brigade commissars [136]. The naval commanders arrested in 1938 were also not taken into account, but their martyrology, although very incomplete, has already been published and numbers at least 16 people [137].

As a result, even according to incomplete data, only in two years the Armed Forces of the USSR irrevocably lost 738 military commanders from their senior command, commanding and political staff, who bore the ranks corresponding to generals. And this happened in peacetime. For comparison: during the long and difficult years of the Great Patriotic War, a total of 416 Soviet generals and admirals perished or died for various reasons [138]. Of these, 79 died from disease, 20 lost their lives as a result of accidents and catastrophes, three committed suicide under circumstances not related to military operations, and 18 were shot and rehabilitated posthumously. Thus, combat losses became the direct cause of the death of 296 representatives of the Soviet generals. 77 Soviet generals were taken prisoner during the war [139], of which 23 were killed and died there have already been taken into account earlier. Consequently, the total irretrievable losses of the senior command staff of the USSR during the war years amounted to 350 people. Thus, the irretrievable losses of the senior staff (which are far from completely known to us) in just two years of repressions (1937-1938) exceeded more than two times the irretrievable losses during the four long years of the bloodiest war in the history of mankind.

But the loss of Soviet generals as a result of repression is by no means exhausted by the above figures. To them must be added 13 more, who were repressed on the eve of the war, and shot after it began, and 18

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the aforementioned, executed and subsequently rehabilitated participants [140]. There are no complete statistics on those of them who committed suicide without waiting for them to come for them, as did, for example, army commissar 1st rank Ya.B. Gamarnik, army commissar of the 2nd rank A.S. Grishin, commander E.I. Goryachev and Brigadier Commissar S.T. Solomko.

A clear illustration of the devastation that the pre-war repressions left behind in the highest echelon of the Red Army is the fate of the members of the Military Council under the People's Commissar of Defense of the USSR, created on November 19, 1934. It included the entire color of the then top military and political leadership of the army and navy. To be convinced of this, it is enough to look at the titles of these people. In February 1936, it included five marshals of the Soviet Union, five commanders of the 1st rank, nine commanders of the 2nd rank, 31 commanders, five commanders of divisions, one brigade commander, two fleet flagships of the 1st rank, two fleet flagships of the 2nd -th rank, one flagship of the 1st rank, one army commissar of the 1st rank, 13 army commissars of the 2nd rank, six corps commissars, two corineers, one corintendent and one corporal, and a total of 85 people. Of these, before the war or at the very beginning of it, 67 were shot, three committed suicide, and one of them is already in prison, Marshal V.K. Blucher was tortured during the investigation, two were convicted, and two more were arrested, but were subsequently released. Commander of the 1st rank S.S. Kamenev managed to die a natural death in 1936, but he was posthumously declared an "enemy of the people." Thus, at the beginning of the war, only nine people remained in the ranks from the original composition of the Council ... [141]. One can imagine what the remaining members, over whom the sword of Damocles constantly hung over the repressions that killed almost all of their associates, could advise the leadership!

Those who remained at hand had to be placed in the positions of repressed military leaders. About how it looked in practice, he spoke at a meeting of the Military Council on November 21, 1937, commander N.V. Kuibyshev, Commander of the Transcaucasian Military District:

"<...> the worst thing is, of course, the unsatisfactory or completely unsatisfactory situation with

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training of infantry troops and military headquarters. The main reason that we have not outlived all these shortcomings is that our district was very drained of blood ...

And here I will give you the facts. Today we have three divisions commanded by captains. But the point is not the rank, but the point is ... THAT, say, the Armenian division is commanded by a captain, who before that did not command not only a regiment, but also a battalion, he commanded only a battery.

Why did we appoint him? I assure you that we are the best

not found. We have the commander of the Azerbaijani division, Mayor. Until that time he had not commanded either a regiment or a battalion, and for the past six years he had been a teacher at a military school.

Voice from the spot. Where did the commanders go?

Kuibyshev. All the rest were transferred to the department of the NKVD without occupying certain positions.'

I have a Georgian division commanded by a major. He, the same thing, did not command a regiment, however, he commanded a battalion, but for the last 4 years he held the position of head of the military and economic supply of the division" [142].

Moreover, one captain, whose ceiling under normal conditions is a battalion, for a long time commanded the troops of the entire Siberian military district [143].

Of course, a significant shortage of commanders was caused mainly by the rapid growth of the army, which was not kept up with the system of training its commanding officers. However, the repressions not only aggravated this shortage, but also noticeably aggravated the already difficult situation with the training of command and technical personnel, especially in higher military educational institutions. After all, their leadership and teaching staff also suffered seriously during that dark period. Of all the heads of the military academies, only one survived. Five successive heads of the Naval Academy and six leaders of the "Shot" courses were shot in succession [144].

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That is, they were arrested by the NKVD. This department did not forgive such conversations. Two and a half months later, on February 2, Commander Kuibyshev Nikolai Vladimirovich (12/13/1893 - 8/1/1938) was arrested and shot six months later. Rehabilitated in 1956

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A characteristic picture of the then reality was drawn in his speech at a meeting of the top leadership of the Red Army, which took place on December 23-31, 1940, the head of the Frunze Military Academy M.S. Khozin:

"Today, the situation with the teaching staff is not quite normal. The staffing of the academy in 1940 looks like this: we received 75 percent of the new teaching staff. These are, as a rule, commanders who have had up to 2 years of service interruption in the Red Army, who have become detached from military practice and do not have methodological skills in teaching. Among the arrived teachers there are

ry who do not have a higher military education, and a number of commanders who were removed from their positions due to the impossibility of their use in the troops.

The level of knowledge and training of the teaching staff arriving to staff the academy is extremely diverse. In some cases (and there are about 20 such people), they simply did not have to be allowed to teach. It was necessary to organize additional training courses with such instructor commanders, and until May they will study with us at the courses organized for this purpose. Only after that we will put them, if I may say so, into service for teaching.

<...> of all the teachers who are in the academy, 81 people do not have combat experience - they have never, anywhere, participated in any war; with command experience in the army from 5 to 10 years - 90 people" [145].

Khozin had every reason to complain about the shortage of qualified teachers in his educational institution: in May 1939, instead of the 40 professors assigned to him by the state, there were only 2, instead of 105 associate professors - 19, and instead of 75 adjuncts - 12 [146]. But the Frunze Academy experienced problems not only with its teachers. In his further speech, Khozin also touched on her listeners:

"<...> The Academy has now grown enormously in numbers and has 2,500 people in its membership. When in 1938 the composition that should be released this year was accepted, then

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out of 610 people, 453 people were accepted with bad marks, and they had not only one bad mark, but 2-3-4 and even more. All this creates a situation in which, in a number of cases, we are working with the command staff—students for nothing. I believe that in the future we need to abandon such a pursuit of quantitative staffing of the academy with students and switch to qualitative selection" [147].

The consequences of the pre-war repressions were especially difficult for the Red Army also because it had a very small reserve of officers who had the combat experience of the First World War, which the Germans made full use of. There were objective reasons for this, because a significant number of officers of the old army died or fled the country during the revolution and the Civil War. But even many of those who defended the Soviet government with weapons in their hands failed to earn her full confidence. But they often had to fight against their own former comrades who fought on the side of the whites, and thereby actually prove their loyalty to the new state. Such by the end of the Civil War served in

The Red Army had about 75,000 of the 250,000 tsarist officers living there. At the same time, many of them held key positions. Thus, approximately 600 former officers served as chiefs of staff of divisions of the Red Army during the years of the Civil War. In the interwar period, they were consistently "purged" from the army, and in 1937-1938. 38 of the 63 former chiefs of staff who had survived by that time became victims of repression [148]. As a result, out of 600 former "military experts" who had combat experience as division chief of staff, by the beginning of World War II, only 25 remained in the Red Army, such a sad arithmetic ... At the same time, most of them lost their posts because of their age or health reasons, but only because of an inappropriate questionnaire. Such measures finally finished off the continuity of the Red Army with the old Russian military school, which had already been thoroughly destroyed by the revolution.

The repressions not only inflicted significant losses on the Red Army in command cadres. No less difficult

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they broke out on the morale and discipline of the personnel, significantly undermining the mutual trust of the fighters and commanders. Yes, this is understandable: many generals known to everyone in the USSR, legendary heroes of the Civil War, sung in verse and prose, whose portraits could be found everywhere. including school textbooks, overnight turned out to be seasoned conspirators, double-dealers, spies, saboteurs and traitors. The cause of numerous problems, mistakes and shortcomings of the army and the state was declared to be the hostile activity of disguised "enemies of the people". The search for these "enemies" and their exposure have become the first duty of all citizens of the country, including military personnel. And so the real bacchanalia of denunciations began. The soldiers lost faith in their commanders and watched their every move with suspicion. The commanders, in turn, reduced their demands on their subordinates, fearing to cause their discontent. In addition to all this, a serious epidemic of drunkenness broke out in the Red Army. The Red Army soldiers drank, feeling their impunity, and their superiors tried to fill alcohol with anxiety and uncertainty about tomorrow. Moreover, commanders and political workers often got drunk with their subordinates, trying to gain their trust in such a cheap way, but in reality only completely undermining their authority. The wide scope of this shameful phenomenon caused the appearance of a special "Order on the fight against drunkenness in the Red Army" No. 0219, signed by Voroshilov on December 28, 1938. It began with a frank confession:

"Recently, drunkenness in the army has taken on truly menacing proportions. This evil especially took root among the commanding staff" [149].

He was echoed by the order of the People's Commissar of the Navy No. 010 of January 17, 1939, which openly stated: "Drunkenness has become the scourge of the fleet" [150].

Another most serious consequence of the repressions was the unwillingness of many Soviet commanders of all ranks to show initiative because of fear of responsibility for its failure. No one wanted to be accused of wrecking

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all the ensuing consequences. It was much easier and safer to diligently carry out the orders issued from above, no matter how senseless they may seem, and then passively wait for new guidelines and, most importantly, "keep your head down". But what was beneficial for the peaceful life of individual people very often caused considerable harm to the common cause, especially in war conditions.

Large-scale repressions in the USSR and its army in the second half of the 1930s took place before the eyes of the whole world. And few people in this world believed the constant incantations in the then Soviet press that "by purging itself of the fascist military filth, the Red Army thereby strengthens its ranks." In this regard, it is especially interesting to know how the unprecedented changes taking place in the Soviet Union at that time were perceived by the foreign military attachés who served there. After all, it was their direct official duties that included assessing the military potential of the host country and informing the political leaders of their states about it.

Here is what the French military attaché in Moscow, Lieutenant Colonel L. Simon, reported to his government in June 1937:

"The army, which until recently was in a privileged position, is no longer spared from the shocks to which other organs are and continue to be subjected. Measures against the army are becoming more and more explicitly political in nature, which cannot but damage its combat capability" [151].

The growing wave of revelations of "enemies of the people" plunged Simon into complete bewilderment. No wonder, because the deputies of the people's commissar of railways, as it was officially announced, arranged train wrecks, and the deputies of the people's commissar of defense were preparing the defeat of their army in a future war ... What could one think of the people's commissar Voroshilov, who nominated his deputies and commanders of the military districts of seasoned spies and traitors? All this simply did not fit in my head, but then Simon had a completely logical question:

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"If official explanations do not correspond to reality, then what is the price of a regime that seeks to destroy energetic and knowledgeable people who have served it for almost twenty years # [152].

Simon made an unambiguous conclusion from the turbulent events unfolding before his eyes:

"<...> it should be recognized that the internal crisis the USSR is experiencing seriously reduces its military potential" [153].

Around the same time, on June 17, 1937, the US military attache in Moscow, Lieutenant Colonel F.R. Faymonville sent his report to Washington with similar conclusions:

"Since the decrease in the level of combat readiness of the Red Army negatively affects the security of the Soviet Union, the country suffered severely as a result of the events of June 11'...

Since a strong Red Army has been an undoubted factor in peace in Europe over the past three years, its recent weakening as a result of the execution of Marshal Tukhachevsky and his associates significantly undermines peace forces and creates much more likely prospects for Japanese and fascist aggression" [154].

In the spring of 1938, after the Anschluss of Austria, the French leadership faced a crucial choice: should it try to stop Hitler's growing claims against Czechoslovakia by force or continue to pursue a policy of appeasement? One of the decisive factors that influenced this decision was the report of the French Ambassador to the USSR R. Coulondre to his government, in which he expressed the opinion that "the USSR is preparing mainly for a defensive war." In addition, as he noted, "the formidable unknown quantity is the real value of

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June 1937. Marshal M.N. was sentenced to death by a special judicial presence of the Supreme Court of the USSR. Tukhachevsky, commanders of the 1st rank I.P. Uborevich and I.E. Yakir, commanders A.I. Kork, V.M. Primakov, V.K. Putna, B.M. Feldman and RP. Eideman.

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chicanery." Therefore, Coulondre made an unequivocal conclusion: in the event of a war with Germany, France should not count on significant military assistance from Russia,

which "was subjected to such bloodletting that it cannot but be in a weakened state" [1535].

At the same time, the British military attaché, under Colonel Firebrace, in a report to his Foreign Office, believed that the Red Army was still strong on the defensive. However, in his opinion:

"<...> from a military point of view, there are significant doubts as to whether the Soviet Union is capable of fulfilling its obligations under the treaty with Czechoslovakia and France by waging an offensive war" [156].

At the end of June 1938, the new military attaché of France in the USSR, Colonel O.-A. Palace, who had always advocated the close cooperation of his country with the Soviet Union and was inclined to justify many of the events that took place in it then, nevertheless reported to Paris:

"1) The Red Army probably no longer has high-ranking commanders who would participate in the world war except as soldiers or non-commissioned officers.

2) The military doctrine developed by Tukhachevsky and his entourage, which the instructions and instructions declared sabotage and canceled, no longer exists.

3) The level of military and general culture of the cadres, which had previously been very low, especially fell due to the fact that the highest command posts were transferred to officers who were quickly promoted to command a corps or army, jumped several steps at once and were chosen either from among the youth, whose training left much to be desired and whose intellectual qualities excluded a critical or non-conformist position, or from among the militaries of no value, who were exposed in the civil war and subsequently relegated, which allowed them to avoid any contact with the "enemies of the people". Under the current conditions, promotion in the Red Army represents a kind of diploma of incompetence.

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4) The purge, spreading down the stairs, deeply disorganizes military units and badly affects their training and even their living conditions. In this regard, the increasingly numerous complaints about the poor maintenance of military equipment and the establishment by Voroshilov of "commissions for economic cooperation" are highly indicative. It is noteworthy that the activities of these commissions, which turn military units into agricultural enterprises and impede education, were recognized as harmful three years earlier and cancelled.

5) The incessant movement of officers <...> against



which the Soviet command since 1930 resolutely acted, as a result of the purge, they became more numerous than ever<...>

6) The establishment of the institution of military commissars, the efforts made to put at the head of military units officers who served in areas remote from each other and unfamiliar with each other, and ever more direct supervision by state security organs puts the cadres of the Red Army into a position of impossibility of useful work and deprives them of any initiative and enthusiasm for the work.

7) Even discipline is undermined by criticism from subordinates who are pushed and encouraged to do so, their bosses, constantly suspected that tomorrow they will turn out to be "enemies of the people."

This unfortunate situation, which inflicted more serious damage on the Soviet cadres (at least on the high command) than the world war, makes the Red Army almost unusable at the present time. The Soviet authorities are aware of this and are making unflagging efforts to train new cadres as soon as possible. However, despite the creation of numerous new schools and the intensive sending of officers to refresher courses, in order to heal the worst wounds from the catastrophe caused by the purge, in all likelihood, it will take many years" [157].

' The institute of military commissars was restored in the Red Army by order of the NPO of the USSR No. 165 of August 20, 1937, issued in accordance with the decree of the Central Executive Committee and the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR "On Approval of the Regulations on Military Commissars of the Workers 'and Peasants' Red Army" of August 15 of the same year. Commissars, as in the years of the Civil War, were equal in rights with commanders. Since that time, all orders were signed not only by the commander, but also by the commissar, without whose signature they were considered invalid [158].

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We apologize to the reader for the lengthy quotation, which contains a very competent, in our opinion, analysis of the personnel policy of the Soviet leadership and the state of the Red Army's combat capability in connection with the repressions. Representatives of the closest neighbors of the USSR drew the same conclusions from the events taking place there. For example, the Latvian military attaché, Major Ponter, wrote to Riga in August 1938:

"The rapid change of commanders and the disappearance of the names of the former leaders from the press indicate that the army suffered huge losses during the purges. <...> the combat effectiveness of the Soviet army has suffered so much as a result of recent investigations and executions that the Soviet regime has realized its inability to fight and will make unlimited concessions in order to avoid a big war now" [159].

According to the Polish Minister of Foreign Affairs Beck, after the great Moscow trials, the USSR became "too weak to start hostilities" [160].

Such a low opinion of the combat readiness of the Red Army and the level of training of its commanders undoubtedly encouraged his enemies to act aggressively. At the same time, potential friends no longer considered the Soviet Union as a suitable possible ally. He was no longer considered strong militarily by both. And just when the Second World War was already on the threshold ...

### Chapter 3

#### THE BEGINNING OF THE SECOND WORLD WAR

#### THE SITUATION IN EUROPE ON THE EVE OF THE WAR

On the night of September 30, 1938, in Munich, the leaders of Britain and France signed the infamous agreement and thereby made the grossest political mistake, following Hitler's lead and giving him the Sudetenland of Czechoslovakia. Then they faced a difficult choice: immediately start a war with Germany or trust the promise of the Fuhrer, who loudly declared three days before the Munich Agreement at a rally in the Berlin Sports Palace in front of 15,000 Nazi activists:

"We are now approaching the last problem that needs to be resolved. This is the last territorial demand I make to Europe. In 1919, three and a half million Germans were cut off from their fellow countrymen by a group of crazy politicians.

And he added, addressing the British Prime Minister Chamberlain:

"I continue to assure him that when the Czechs settle relations with their national minorities, the state of Czechoslovakia will cease to interest me, and, if you like, I can give him one more guarantee: we do not need any territories of Czechoslovakia" [161] .

On that unfortunate day, Chamberlain and his French colleague Daladier preferred to believe the false words of the Fuhrer. They wanted to buy lasting peace in Europe for a piece of Czech land, but the treaty they signed in Munich was destined to have a short life. Just six months later, despite all his promises, Hitler swallowed up the Czech Republic without any embarrassment. Everything was done without the use of force:

only the threat from Germany was enough. The weak-willed Czech President Hacha could not stand the unceremonious pressure of the Nazis and on March 15, 1939, he himself signed an official declaration in Berlin. It said:

"The President of Czechoslovakia declared that, striving <...> for the final establishment of peace, he with full confidence leaves the fate of the Czech people and country in the hands of the Fuhrer of the German Reich" [162].

On the same day, German troops began the occupation of Bohemia (Bohemia) and Moravia, and the next day they were announced to the whole world about their accession to Germany as a protectorate. Even the day before, on March 14, Slovakia seceded from the Czech Republic, creating its own puppet government. Thus, formally, Hitler did not violate the Munich Agreement: Czechoslovakia, whose borders were guaranteed to be inviolable, no longer existed de jure. Nevertheless, all these dramatic events completely dispelled all former illusions of the leaders of the Western countries regarding the real intentions and goals of the German leadership. They finally realized that their earlier short-sighted policy of appeasement only encouraged the growing appetite of the Nazis, who could only be stopped by force, or at least the threat of force.

Poland was to become the next victim of German aggression. Already on March 21, the Germans in an ultimatum form demanded that the Poles annex Danzig to Germany and build an extraterritorial railway through the "Polish corridor", and at the same time a highway. In this environment, during a debate in the British Parliamentary Committee on Foreign Policy on March 27, Chamberlain spoke of the need to accept the challenge of Hitler in order to "bridle and frustrate Germany's attempt to achieve world domination" [163].

And on March 31, he already publicly announced in Parliament:

"<...> in the event of any action that will clearly threaten the independence of Poland and which the Polish government accordingly deems necessary to resist with its national armed forces, His Majesty's Government considers itself obliged immediately

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give the Polish government all the support that is in its power" [164].

France took a similar position. Together with England, she began to take practical steps to strengthen her own military capabilities and expand the anti-German coalition. One of these sha-

gov began negotiations between the military representatives of England, France and Poland. Their goal was to establish closer cooperation in the face of the growing threat from Germany.

Unlike the Czechs, the Poles were ready, if necessary, to fight the Germans without hesitation. Moreover, on August 18, 1939, the Polish ambassador to France, J. Lukaszewicz, self-confidently told the Minister of Foreign Affairs of this country, J. Bonnet: "Not the Germans, but the Poles will break into the depths of Germany in the very first days of the war [165]. A little later, on August 26, one of the Polish ministers without a shadow of a doubt assured the American ambassador to the USSR Joseph Davis: "Three weeks after the start of the war, Polish troops will be in Berlin" [166]. However, despite the belligerent statements of Poland's politicians, its military men were quite sober in assessing their real possibilities. Polish Commander-in-Chief Rydz-Smigly

Marshal Rydz-Smigly on the eve of the war conducts a review of the 1st light tank battalion armed with 7TP tanks

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informed the French General Staff that in the event of a war with Germany, his army had purely defensive plans. Their main goal was to "inflict the greatest losses on the Germans and prevent themselves from being defeated before the start of the Allied operations in the West" [167].

To successfully resist the Wehrmacht, the Poles did not have enough weapons, especially modern ones. From the allies, they hoped to get, first of all, tanks and aircraft, but in the end they got a little. The main acquisition was 50 French Renault B-35 light tanks. They arrived in Poland in July 1939, shortly before the start of the war, so they did not have time to master them properly. In addition to them, the Poles received for review and evaluation three French light tanks "Hotchkiss H-35" and the only copy of the English light tank "Matilda {[]}. Another 50 B-35s were purchased, but they were never delivered to Poland before the war broke out.

With aviation, things were even worse. England and France then themselves were noticeably inferior to Germany in the number of modern combat aircraft. They had to make great efforts to close this gap, and they could not afford to export large quantities of scarce equipment even to their closest allies. In this regard, I would like to clarify one old misconception. Prominent Soviet historian D.M. Prokhorov back in the early 60s. published a monograph in which he stated:

"<...> The British avoided providing assistance to Poland with weapons for the ground forces and the navy, but promised significant support in the air by transferring 524 bombers, 500 fighters and 280 other aircraft to Poland.

different types, which seemed quite sufficient to counteract the German air force" [168]. The number of planes promised to Poland (1304) caused us great doubts. Projector in his book referred to the Polish military historian Jerzy Kirchmaier. On page 15 he pointed out, it really refers to airplanes:

"According to the data transmitted through General Clayton and Colonel Davidson, in May 1939 British aircraft could use against the Germans in the first line: 524 bombers, 500 fighters, 96 communications

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aircraft, 184 reconnaissance aircraft and seaplanes" [169]. As you can see, it was about the total fleet of combat vehicles of the British aviation of that period. These figures are confirmed by the minutes of the first meeting of the Polish-British staff talks on aviation matters, held on May 24, 1939, which is published in a collection of documents published in Warsaw in 1968. England was represented by Air Colonel Davidson. During the discussion, he informed his Polish colleagues! on the current state of affairs in the British Air Force. At that time they numbered: ;

"524 bombers with a range of over 560 km, 500 fighters (11.11.39), of which 50-70% are modern, 96 aircraft for communication with ground forces,

184 scouts and seaplanes" [170].

It is clear that the British were not going to send all their first-line aircraft to the Poles at once. Apparently, D.M. The projector used the services of an unscrupulous translator and made an unfortunate mistake, which, unfortunately, is replicated in all subsequent editions of his book, and is also repeated in the works of many other historians.

In the metropolis, another 2,000 aircraft were stored in warehouses, which were hopelessly outdated and were not suitable for a war with Germany. They were kept only in case of colonial conflicts and were not thrown into battle even in the most difficult time of the "battle for England". The Poles, for obvious reasons, were only interested in modern combat vehicles. Moreover, they themselves had to fully pay for all deliveries. After all, the concept of "lend-lease" did not yet exist at that time. In July 1939, when the threat of war increased immeasurably, the Chief of the British General Staff, General Ironside, who arrived in Warsaw, "promised to supply Poland with 100 bombers of the latest design and 40 Hurricane-type fighters" [171]. But even these planes did not manage to get to Poland on time.

' On the Polish side, negotiations were conducted by the Chief of Staff of the Polish

Air Force General Wejski, the Polish military attache in London, Lieutenant Colonel Kwieczynski, as well as Majors Bobinski and Keconi from the main headquarters of the Polish army.

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But let us return to the Anglo-French diplomacy of the spring of 1939. One of the areas of its activity was the well-known attempt to achieve a military alliance with the USSR directed against Nazi Germany. The course and results of the political and military negotiations between the representatives of Britain, France and the USSR have been repeatedly described in detail. Let's try to analyze the reasons for their failure.

The interruption we mentioned at the end of 1938 in the development of new Soviet military plans against the backdrop of turbulent events in the international situation and a significant change in the borders in Europe did not happen by chance. It was obviously related to the fact that the top Soviet leadership could not finally decide who should be considered their most likely adversary and who their partner. The ever-increasing threat from Nazi Germany did not cause any doubts, however, along with it, not only Poland and Finland were recorded as future enemies, but sometimes even Sweden, which remained neutral in all wars, starting from 1814. The directive of Voroshilov and Shaposhnikov to the People's Commissar of the Navy dated February 27, 1939 stated:

"The operational plan of the Red Army for 1939 is based on the assumption

zheniya simultaneous action against the USSR:

in the West, the combined forces of Germany and Poland, with the probable participation of the Italian navy, and in the East, Japan.

The possibility of maintaining neutrality by Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Romania, Bulgaria and Turkey is taken into account, the duration and stability of which will depend on the created political situation and the success of the first operations of the Red Army and the RKVMF" [172].

It should be noted that Finland, Estonia, Latvia and Romania, which were previously invariably included in the list of the first enemies of the USSR, this time were transferred to potentially neutral countries. On the other hand, England invariably continued to be regarded as <...> the hidden organizer and leader of aggression" against the Soviet Union [173]. Knowing all these circumstances, one should not be surprised at the failure

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political and military negotiations between England, France and the USSR on the eve of the Second World War. They had very little chance of ending with success, too deep a gulf of mistrust divided their participants. There were good reasons for this distrust on both sides. First of all, the long-term mutual hostility that began immediately after the conclusion of the separate Brest peace in 1918 and the annulment of all Russian debts by the Bolsheviks. The continuous hostile propaganda waged against each other by irreconcilable ideological opponents, as well as repeated mutual attempts to undermine each other's social system, also played their negative role. At the same time, each had reason to fear that in the end he would have to drag chestnuts out of the fire with his bare hands for the benefit of the other, and, naturally, did not want this for

take.

The shameful Munich Agreement also made an undeniable negative contribution to the failure of the attempt to create a broad coalition against the growing aggression on the part of Germany. It not only encouraged Hitler's further appetites, but also greatly undermined the confidence of the USSR in the desire of England and France to take some practical measures to curb Nazi aggression. In addition, at that time the Soviet Union, economically and militarily, was being promoted among the leading countries of the world and wanted to be properly considered in important international affairs. Therefore, Stalin felt undeservedly offended when his country was unceremoniously removed from participation in deciding the fate of Czechoslovakia in the autumn of 1938.

Contrary to popular belief, much says that the USSR at that time was not at all eager to provide real assistance to the Czechs. Thus, Moscow deliberately did not respond to Prague's request for possible military assistance to Czechoslovakia for a long time, until it was too late. The diplomatic and military activity of the Soviet Union was purely demonstrative. In fact, he was not going to fight with anyone. Irrefutable proof of this is the testimony of a prominent military historian and expert in pre-war Soviet military planning, Colonel General Yu.A. Gorkov that in [the headquarters of the Red Army the plan

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provision of military assistance to Czechoslovakia was not developed even for the future [174]. Another characteristic touch: when the Poles began to demand that the Czechs hand over Teshin to them, the USSR issued an official note in which it threatened to denounce the Soviet-Polish non-aggression pact if they did not stop. The Poles sharply rejected the Soviet threat and nevertheless brought their troops into Teszyn. And the USSR did not react to this in any way, "forgetting" about its own note. Because of this, his authority in the eyes of the Polish leadership has fallen significantly.

However, the Munich deal was

perceived by the Soviet leaders as a frank attempt to turn German aggression to the East, i.e. to rule it against the USSR. In fact, this point of view did not correspond to reality in any way, because it was absolutely unacceptable for England and France to give Germany even the slightest opportunity to seize the enormous Soviet raw materials and food resources. Possessing them, the Germans, of course, became the dominant force in Europe, and, having united with Japan, they could well begin to fight for the redivision of the world. In addition, the strategy of blocking Germany, successfully tested by the Allies during the First World War, would have lost all meaning if it had managed to seize the fertile lands and inexhaustible sources of raw materials in the East. In fact, the leadership of England and France agreed to the Munich Agreement with Germany, trying in vain to maintain the status quo in Europe at the lowest possible cost. However, in this case, the true motives of the actions of the British and French are not so significant. Much more important is the opinion that was formed about them at that time by the leadership of the USSR. And this leadership saw in the Munich agreement an obvious confirmation of the validity of their long-standing deep distrust of Russia's former allies in the Entente.

The British and French also had real reasons not to believe in the ability of the Soviet Union to become their useful and effective partner against Germany. After the loud exposure of large-scale conspiracies in 1937-1938, and related show trials and mass "purges" in the country and its armed forces, they had well-founded doubts about

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the reliability and stability of the USSR as a military ally and the ability of its army to successfully wage a major modern war. This is clearly illustrated by the examples given in the previous chapter of reports from Moscow by foreign military attachés.

One more, no less important consideration can be added to this: England and France, just like the USSR, greatly underestimated the military power of Germany that had recently increased and hoped that, if necessary, they would be able to cope with it on their own .. No one then until he realized that the Wehrmacht, which had increased many times over in a short time after the elimination of the Versailles restrictions, adopted not only the latest military equipment, but also the advanced tactics of "blitzkrieg", turning into one of the strongest armies in the world.

The Anglo-French leadership still harbored the hope that, in the face of the imminent threat of a rebuff from their side, Germany would still not dare to take an adventure and unleash another world war. At the same time, they did not forget that events could go according to a completely different scenario, and were forced to build their relations with the USSR



considering this possibility. The aims of the Anglo-Soviet political negotiations at that time are quite frankly stated in a memorandum of the British Foreign Office dated May 22, 1939:

"It seems expedient to conclude some kind of agreement, according to which the Soviet Union would come to our aid in the event of an attack on us in the West, and not only in order to force [Germany to wage a war on two fronts, but also, perhaps, for the reason stated by the Turkish Foreign Minister to General Weygand: if war is inevitable, then it is necessary to try to involve the Soviet Union in it, otherwise, at the end of the war, the Soviet Union, with its untouched army and England and Germany lying in ruins, would dominate in Europe. (There are indications that genuine Soviet policy is, and will be, aimed at drawing us into the war and trying to stay out of it ourselves.) Even if we cannot fully rely on the sincere desire or ability of the Soviet

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governments to fulfill their treaty obligations, but nevertheless, the alternative, in which the Soviet Union remains free from all restrictions and is constantly tempted to flirt with both parties and play them off against each other, can be no less, and perhaps even a more dangerous situation than that which will arise in the case of cooperation with an unscrupulous or incompetent partner" [175].

Thus, British politicians believed that, despite all the shortcomings that the USSR had in their eyes, having it as an ally would be much more useful than leaving it neutral, not to mention turning it into an enemy. At the same time, they felt exactly what Stalin's strategy was at that time. And he really considered the war inevitable and in this situation he tried to play the most advantageous role for himself. Stalin announced his plan of action much earlier than the events described, in a speech at the Plenum of the Central Committee of the RCP (b), delivered on January 19, 1925:

"If something seriously matures, then our intervention, I will not say necessarily active, I will not say necessarily immediate, it may turn out to be absolutely necessary. This is precisely the hope that victory could be won for us in the present situation. This does not mean that we must necessarily go to active action against someone. This. wrong. If someone has such a note slipping - it's wrong. If the war starts, we will, of course, be the last to come out, the very last, in order to throw a weight on the scales, a weight that could outweigh" [176].

These Stalinist thoughts formed the basis of the Soviet foreign policy of that time. From his point of view, the conclusion of a military alliance with England and France was extremely disadvantageous for the USSR, since in this case the Soviet Union would have to enter the war from the very beginning, because Stalin intended to stay away from the impending battle as long as possible. While other countries bled

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To each other in a deadly struggle, he was going to strengthen his state and his army. According to Stalin's calculations, he did not need to rush anywhere, since he expected a long struggle of attrition between Germany and England with France, modeled on the First World War. The position of an outside observer allowed the Soviet Union to choose its own circumstances and time for entering the war in order to end it according to its own scenario. This is exactly what the British feared.

Stalin decided not just to wait for such a moment, but during this time to extract the maximum benefits that promised the position of a decisive third force standing above the fray. After all, both warring coalitions, ready to generously pay for the help of their potential powerful ally, would have sought to win over to their side. And before the war, the British and French did not offer the USSR any material acquisitions. The result of an agreement with them would only be to prevent war or postpone it until later. Meanwhile, back in April 1939, the first cautious mutual Soviet-German probes began at the diplomatic level. At first they were still very timid, since both sides, quite rightly, were afraid of running into an insulting refusal from their opponent. After all, it was extremely difficult to represent Germany and the USSR as political partners. Therefore, at first it was mainly about improving trade between the two MI countries.

The real breakthrough came on July 26, when the Germans first offered the Soviet representatives the GA. Astakhov<sup>1</sup> and E.I. Babarin<sup>2</sup> not just an abstract improvement in relationships, but concrete topics for negotiating the price of this improvement. It was about the Baltic States, Poland and Romania. The Germans only needed the USSR not to be on the side of England, France and Poland in case

<sup>1</sup> Astakhov G.A. - Advisor to the Soviet embassy in Berlin,

due to the absence of the ambassador, he was temporary chargé d'affaires of the USSR in Germany from April to August 1939.

\* Babarin E.I. - Deputy Soviet trade mission in

Berlin, due to the absence of a sales representative, he performed his duties.

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their conflict with Germany. K. Schnurre, head of the East European referent office of the German Foreign Ministry, repeated the phrase that had already been heard earlier that "the German shop has all the goods" for the USSR [177]. It is curious how he substantiated the very possibility of establishing good political relations between the communist USSR and the fascist countries:

"<...> in the entire area from the Baltic Sea to the Black Sea and the Far East, in my opinion, there are no insoluble foreign policy problems between our countries. In addition to this, despite all the differences in worldview, there is one common element in the ideology of Germany, Italy and the Soviet Union: opposition to capitalist democracies. Neither we nor Italy have anything in common with the capitalist West. Therefore, it seems to us rather unnatural for a socialist state to take the side of Western democracies" [178].

After a personal conversation between Imperial Foreign Minister Ribbentrop and Astakhov on August 3, Schnurre proposed the idea of adding a secret additional protocol to the trade and credit agreement desirable for both sides, stipulating a general improvement in relations between them. Initially, a sharp refusal came from Moscow to this unexpected German proposal; they did not want to tie politics to a purely economic document. But the idea was not in vain and very soon was put into practice, however, in a slightly different capacity.

Incredible, at first glance, the rapprochement between the USSR and Germany did not happen by chance. Along with fundamental ideological contradictions, they had common opponents, and above all, England. Stalin then considered it a much more dangerous enemy of the USSR than Nazi Germany, since he seriously feared that this country was trying to direct German aggression towards the Soviet Union. He was not at all averse, in turn, to deal with the British with German hands. Therefore, it is clear that the new serious German proposal, presented by Schulenburg to Molotov on August 15, fell on fertile ground. On this day Shu

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Lenburg spoke for the first time about the conclusion between the USSR and Germany not only of a broad trade agreement, but also of a non-aggression pact. Two days later, Ribbentrop clarified through the German ambassador that this was a 25-year pact. Germans are very

they were in a hurry, because only a few days remained before the date Hitler had appointed for the attack on Poland. And Ribbentrop announced that he was ready to fly to Moscow to sign the treaty even the next day.

On August 19, Schulenburg handed over to Molotov the German version of the future pact. On the same day, he received from the People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs a Soviet draft treaty, which, unlike the German one, contained not two, but five points. The most important of these was the desire to attach to it, as an integral part, a special protocol on foreign policy issues. The duration of the agreement was limited to five years. There was only one thing that did not suit Hitler in the Soviet proposal: Ribbentrop was invited to come to Moscow too late, on August 26 or 27. Such terms were completely unacceptable to the Germans in connection with their intention to attack Poland on the morning of 26 August. By this time, they wanted to have in their pocket an already signed and valid treaty in order to exclude any surprises in the behavior of the Soviet Union after the start of the war. In response to Hitler's urgent personal request, Stalin agreed to take the Ribbentrop earlier, on 23 August. He arrived in Moscow at one o'clock in the afternoon and demonstrated to the whole world an impressive example of lightning-fast successful diplomacy. It was not at all difficult, since the interest of the parties in the speedy conclusion of the contract was mutual. In order to conclude the treaty as soon as possible, Hitler then readily went to meet any wishes of Stalin. Thus, the Baltic ports of Libava (Liepaja) and Vindava (Ventspils) were transferred to the sphere of Soviet influence at its first request. The situation forced the Fuhrer not to be stingy, and when dividing spheres of influence with the Soviet Union, he showed considerable generosity. And no wonder: in fact, the Germans very profitably acquired invaluable peace of mind on the border with the USSR by giving him lands that did not belong to them anyway and which they, in any case, were gathering soon after.

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V.M. Molotov signs the Non-Aggression Pact. Behind: Chief of the General Staff, Commander of the Army [rank B.M. Shaposhnikov, I. von Ribbentrop, I.V. Stalin

take back. Hitler himself very accurately described the agreement with the Soviet country: "This is a pact with Satan to cast out the devil" [179]. No one had the slightest doubt that a life-and-death war between the USSR and Germany was only a matter of time. And that time is running out fast...

The final agreed text of the treaty consisted of seven points and was signed at 2:30 am on 24 August. At the same time, August 23, 1939 is considered the official date of its signing. The pact received its name in honor of Molotov and Ribbentrop, who signed it, and entered into force.

immediately, without even waiting for ratification, and its validity period was set at 10 years. Moreover, if none of the contracting parties denounced the agreement for

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year before its expiration, it is automatically extended for the next five years. The treaty was immediately published in all the newspapers, because there was nothing unusual in its content. But the point was not at all in the pact itself: there was no special need for its conclusion, after all, on April 24, 1926 in Berlin, the representatives of the USSR and Germany had already signed a non-aggression and neutrality pact. It was concluded for five years, and on June 24, 1931], it was extended without specifying an expiration date. This treaty was terminated only a year after its denunciation by any of the contracting parties, and in case of its absence continued to operate [180]. He acted in 1939.

Obviously, the real meaning of the 1939 pact for both parties lay in the additional protocol that remained secret for the rest of the world. Here is his text:

“When signing the non-aggression pact between Germany and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, the undersigned plenipotentiaries of both parties discussed in a strictly confidential manner the question of delimiting the spheres of mutual interests in Eastern Europe. This discussion led to the following result:

1. In the event of a territorial and political rearrangement of the regions that are part of the Baltic states (Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania), the northern border of Lithuania is simultaneously the border of the spheres of interests of Germany and the USSR. At the same time, the interests of Lithuania in relation to the Vilna region are recognized by both parties.

2. In the event of a territorial and political rearrangement of the regions that are part of the Polish state, the border between the spheres of interests of Germany and the USSR will approximately run along the line of the rivers Nareva, Vistula and Sana.

The question whether the maintenance of an independent Polish state is desirable in mutual interests, and what the boundaries of this state will be, can only be definitively clarified in the course of further political development.

In any case, both governments will resolve this issue by way of friendly mutual agreement.

3. Regarding the south-east of Europe, the Soviet side emphasizes the interest of the USSR in Bessarabia. From the German hundred

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The crown declares its complete political disinterest in these areas.

4. This protocol will be kept strictly secret by both parties.

Moscow,

August 23, 1939

By authorization for the Government of the  
Government of the USSR [Germany

V. Molotov I. Ribbentrop" [191].

It should be noted that the very conclusion of the secret protocol, regardless of its content, was an undoubted departure from the principle of renunciation of secret diplomacy, publicly proclaimed at the dawn of Soviet power in the "Decree on Peace". Moreover, the secret protocol directly contradicted Article 3 of the non-aggression pact between the USSR and Poland, concluded on July 25, 1932 and extended on May 5, 1934 until the end of 1945. It was said very clearly:

"Each of the contracting parties undertakes not to take part in any agreements, from an aggressive point of view, clearly hostile to the other side" [182].

Moreover, the leaders of the USSR and Germany secretly took upon themselves the solution of the most important issues of the existence of other countries, frankly trampling on one of the principles of the fundamental international law - the principle of the sovereign equality of states. But the people who drew up and signed the pact least of all thought about the moral side of their actions and about some rights of those countries and their populations that they shamelessly divided among themselves, because they were much more concerned about their own benefit. Hitler made Stalin an offer that was hard to refuse. Having accepted it, the Soviet leader finally got a real opportunity to annex the lands that were once part of the Russian Empire to the USSR. At that time, Stalin sincerely did not consider this step his great success and was sure that now all the trump cards were in his hands and he could dictate the terms of the big international game whenever he liked.

Meanwhile, he did not realize the most serious internal inconsistency of his international policy: the foundations

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Nazi Germany, a country with

an initially deeply hostile ideology. Thus, the USSR provided significant assistance to its own undoubted mortal enemy. The main thing in this assistance was not even the supply of strategic raw materials to Germany and not moral support for her in the international arena. The Germans were given an invaluable opportunity to beat their enemies one by one, and they did not miss it.

If we briefly summarize the development of events in Europe on the eve of the Second World War and during its initial period, the following picture emerges. Taking advantage of the connivance of the leadership of the Western powers, and above all of England and France, with their short-sighted policy of "appeasement" [of Germany, which culminated in the Munich Agreement, Hitler and his clique created a powerful army of aggression, the Wehrmacht, on the foundation prepared in advance by the Reichswehr. With the mastery of Austria and Czechoslovakia, Nazi Germany reached favorable starting points for unleashing the Second World War. Having secured a strong rear for themselves as a result of collusion with the USSR formalized by the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, the Nazis managed in a short time to radically change the balance of power in Europe in their favor. And then it was the turn of the Soviet Union...

Involuntarily, the question arises: did Stalin have an alternative to concluding a pact with the Nazis, and if so, which one? As you know, history does not tolerate the subjunctive mood, but this is already when the events that have occurred have become history. And at that time, Stalin, of course, had a choice of various options for action. For example, to conclude a military alliance with England and France, directed against Germany. We have already talked about why this feature was not implemented. One more reason can be added: despite all the advice and persuasion of the British and French, the Poles categorically refused to allow the Red Army into their territory, and they had serious misgivings. Here is how they were formulated by the then Minister of Foreign Affairs of Polysky, Yu. Beck:

"Marshal Voroshilov is now trying to carry out peacefully what he achieved with the help of military force in 1920" [183].

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However, the persistence of the Poles in this important issue for them was by no means unlimited. Poland's national hero and longtime leader, Marshal J. Pilsudski, bequeathed to his heirs the principle that it was forbidden even to consider allowing foreign soldiers to enter the country. But during the war, this rule could be softened. That is why on August 19, 1939, the Chief of the General Staff of the Polish Army, General V. Stakhevich, in a conversation with the French and British military attaches, insisted at first for a long time: "Poland cannot agree that foreign troops will enter its territory." But then he nevertheless added: "<...> on the one hand, this principle was opposed to the Germans, and on the other

side, as soon as hostilities begin, it will not have its original significance" [184].

In essence, at that time it was advantageous for the USSR to use the territory of Poland as a base in case of a war with Germany. The Polish army, by its resistance, would have secured time quite sufficient for the complete mobilization and deployment of the Red Army. In battles with the Poles, the Germans would have suffered heavy losses in men and expended considerable materiel, especially fuel and ammunition. The Wehrmacht would not have been able to immediately launch intensive operations against the USSR. In a clash with the Red Army, its flanks were not secured: neither Romania nor Finland in 1939 were themselves allies of Germany, and did not have German troops on their territory. And most importantly, the French army was then hovering over the German rear in the West, which, by the mere fact of its existence, diverted significant German forces. At the same time, the Wehrmacht itself, the model of the summer of 1939, was not at all as great and strong as it became two years later. He still had neither fresh combat experience, nor significant trained manpower, nor sufficient material resources necessary for waging a long war on two fronts, nor even a developed plan for war with the USSR. years for the Red Army would have been much more favorable than in the ill-fated June 1941.

Even simply avoiding joining any military blocs and pursuing a simple hostile neutral policy

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Literacy in relation to Germany would be much more beneficial for the USSR than direct material and moral support for its undoubted future enemy. The German economy was not ready for a long war of attrition under the blockade imposed by the Allies. The German military leadership was well aware of this, so Hitler hastened to cheer up his generals even before the agreement with the USSR was signed. Speaking to them on August 22, 1939, he declared with glee:

"The Russians said they were ready to make a pact. Thus, I knocked out of the hands of the Western masters [England and France] their weapons" [185].

Hitler was referring to the blockade of Germany by the Allies, which represented a mortal threat both to its economy and to the entire population.

At that time, the Third Reich had sufficient resources for only seven of the 30 most important types of raw materials indispensable for the operation of the military industry. The absence of sources of nickel, tin, tungsten, molybdenum, chromium, beryllium, platinum, and bauxites was especially pronounced [186]. The remoteness of most sources further aggravated the situation.



import. For example, the Germans bought chromium mainly in South Africa and Turkey, 90% of copper - mainly in the British dominions, Africa, Chile and the USA, nickel - in Canada and Norway, antimony and tungsten - in China. All boxies were imported from the Balkans and from the Dutch colonies in Indonesia. Germany had to import over 70% of its oil and oil products, with North and South America being the main source for them [187].

The Allied blockade immediately cut off the Third Reich from most of these sources. The Germans were also unable to feed themselves. Deprived of Soviet supplies, Germany would be left without food and raw materials vital to it, especially such strategically important ones as oil products, non-ferrous and alloying metals, cotton and timber products. The size of these deliveries was quite impressive: from September 1939 to June 22, 1941, the Soviet Union exported goods to Germany with a total weight of 4,541,205 tons [188].

We must not forget about other scarce goods that came to the Germans in transit through Soviet territory.

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Thus, cargo from Japan, China and Manchukuo rolled along the Trans-Siberian Railway to Germany. Among the various goods from the Far East, rubber, copper, tungsten ore, and foodstuffs were of the greatest importance. In total, in 1940 and the first five months of 1941, 378,608 tons of cargo fell into the Reich from there. At the same time, Soviet railways transported 2,430 tons of cotton, wool and dried fruits to Germany from Afghanistan. The same goods came from Iran to the same address. In addition, from September 1939 to the end of May 1941, the Germans received from there a lot of food, leather and other goods they needed with a total weight of 107,580 tons [189]. Thus, during the validity of the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact, the total weight of German imports from the USSR, as well as from the Far and Middle East in transit through the territory of the Soviet Union, reached 5,029,823 tons. To better imagine the magnitude of this vast flow, it is enough to say that 8383 standard trains of that time were required for its transportation. The importance that the German leadership attached to rates from the East is clearly demonstrated by its reaction to the delay in sending oil products and grains from the USSR to Germany | April 1940. The delay occurred in response to the failure of the Germans to fulfill Soviet orders. This immediately led to the following policy document:

"All German departments in their work are obliged to proceed from the fact that raw materials from Russia are absolutely vital for us, that in order to wage a long war we will need to conclude further contracts, and for this reason it is very important that the conditions of current contracts be fulfilled on time, and that any distrust on the part of the Russians would disappear. In accordance with the express decision of the Führer, in the event that

our mutual deliveries to the Russians are in danger of non-fulfilment, even shipments to the Wehrmacht must be delayed in order to ensure punctual deliveries to Russia" [190].

Without Soviet supplies, the noose of the blockade of the Allies would have tightened the throat of Germany much tighter, which at that time did not yet have at its disposal the huge material assets and reserves of useful materials that it later captured in the West.

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fossils. Moreover, at that time she had not yet captured advantageous strategic positions, such as Norwegian and French ports. Such a situation would undoubtedly encourage decisive action among Hitler's influential opponents among the German generals and significantly reduce his chances of retaining his undivided power. At the same time, industrial equipment and advanced technologies received from the Germans during the period of Soviet-German cooperation could well have been acquired by the USSR in the USA. Indeed, without Soviet assistance to Germany and without the attack of the Red Army on Finland, the Americans would not have declared a "moral embargo" on the supply of equipment and strategic raw materials to the Soviet Union, as happened in reality. Thus, Stalin, unfortunately, chose the worst course of action available to him. But this list of his pre-war mistakes is far from exhausted. We will dwell on them later.

#### POLAND IS THE FIRST VICTIMS OF THE AGGRESSOR

A brief chronicle of the events of August-September 1939 makes it possible to trace how the threat of the outbreak of war inevitably grew. When Hitler learned in the early morning of August 24 of the complete success of the Ribbentrop mission, he began banging his fists on the wall with joy and shouting: "Now the whole world is in my pocket!" According to the secret additional protocol to the concluded Molotov-Ribbentrop pact, Poland was divided on the spheres of interest of Germany and the USSR. But Stalin did not undertake any obligation to use armed force to seize his sphere of interests. She was supposed to go to him as a payment for non-intervention in the war between Germany and Poland. The policy of "appeasement" on the part of Britain and France, the intransigence of Poland and the conclusion of the Soviet-German non-aggression pact led to the fact that the political crisis of 1939 escalated in September into a war unleashed by Germany. At the same time, Hitler hoped until the last moment that England and France would not take any active military action against Germany. After all, she was not ready to wage war simultaneously on the Western and Eastern fronts. 31 August on

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The chief of the general staff of the ground forces of the Wehrmacht wrote in his diary:

The Fuhrer is calm. <...> He hopes that the French and the British will not enter the territory of Germany" [191].

The purpose of the first operations of the German troops was to disrupt the mobilization and deployment of the Polish armed forces and their subsequent rapid defeat. The German plan "Weiss" ("White") was based on the idea of deep envelopment, encirclement and subsequent destruction of the main forces of the Polish army in the area west of the Vistula and Narew rivers in the course of one strategic operation. The decisive role in the implementation of the plan was assigned to tank and motorized formations and aviation. By doing so, Hitler hoped to present England and France with a *fait accompli*. The concentration and mobilization of the Wehrmacht were carried out in compliance with all measures of disguise and disinformation, so as not to cause corresponding actions on the part of Poland. Troops were sent to East Prussia under the pretext of celebrating the 25th Anniversary of the defeat of the Russian troops in August 1914. Divisions were sent to Pomerania and Silesia ostensibly to strengthen the defense. Tank and motorized formations were brought out for exercises in readiness to move quickly to their starting areas at the last moment before the invasion.

For delivering concentric strikes, two army groups were created: from the side of Silesia - "South" under the command of Colonel General G. von Rundstedt, consisting of three armies (32? /, calculated divisions, of which 4 tank, 4 light "And 2 motorized"); from Pomerania and East Prussia - "North" - Colonel-General F. Bock (two armies, a total of 202 divisions, of which 3 were tank and 2 were motorized). To cover the gap between these army groups, the Germans allocated the minimum number of troops that were supposed to pin down the Polish army "Poznan".

Polish intelligence basically managed to correctly reveal the composition of the German groups deployed on the border

' The Weiss plan was signed by Hitler on April 3, 1939, and

On April 28, Germany unilaterally annulled the German-Polish non-aggression pact.

\*1

Mobile formations, direct heirs of the cavalry divisions. One of them had a tank regiment (226 tanks), and the other three had a tank battalion (62-85 tanks).

feasts. So, the Poles believed that in the Army Group "South" there were 28 formations, and von Bock - 20-22 divisions.

Poland could oppose this armada with 25? /, an infantry division and 16 brigades (mountain infantry - 3, cavalry - and armored motorized - 2), in which there were a total of 1 million people. They had to fight against 1516 thousand German soldiers and officers.

The balance of power has developed in favor of the Germans in all areas.  
indicators:

- 53?/, German divisions against 33?/, Polish (if one division is equated to two brigades);

- seven German tank and four light divisions, as well as a separate tank regiment (2690 tanks) against two Polish armored motorized brigades, three separate tank battalions, 11 groups of tankettes attached to kavbri reptiles, and 26 tankettes attached to infantry divisions (887 tanks and tankettes, of which only 475 were serviceable);

- 9824 thousand German guns against 2840 Polish ones;

- 2085 German aircraft, of which 1323 were combat aircraft against 433 Polish ones, of which 313 were combat [192, 193, 194].

The Germans were also superior to the Poles in terms of quality. This is especially striking in relation to tank troops. [Germany fielded 87 R7.Sh and 198 R? medium tanks against Poland. [U, 1127 light R2.P, 167 captured Czech light tanks, including 112 R? 7.35 (@ and 55 R7.38 (@), and also 973 light machine-gun R7[. The remaining 138 were command tanks.

As part of the armored units of the Polish army, there were only 22 Vickers-B tanks with a short-barreled 47-mm cannon and 16 British-made twin-turret Vickers-A machine guns, 95 7TR / m tanks with a 37-mm cannon and 40 twin-turret machine-gun 7TRA \ (Polish analogues of the Vickers or our T-26), fifty French Renault B-35 tanks with a 37-mm cannon and 90 hopelessly outdated Renault ET-17s, a total of 313 combat vehicles. In addition, they had 574 tankettes TK and TK\$. By the way, for 24 TK\$, the Poles managed to install 20-mm anti-tank rifles, which easily pierced the bulletproof armor of light German tanks. However, a large number of wedges, especially TK. first

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Polish cavalry with a cart

releases built in the early 30s were unserviceable due to heavy wear and lack of spare parts [195].

The Germans also had superiority in the air: the Luftwaffe far outnumbered the Polish aviation and quantitatively, and quality.

Thus, the forces and means of the parties in the German-Polish war were incomparable. Yes, this is understandable, the gap in the human and economic potential of these countries was too great. On top of this, the Germans are widely

A company of Polish tankettes TK\$ September 13, 1939 near Warsaw is preparing for a counterattack

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used weapons, military equipment and ammunition captured in the Czech Republic against the Poles. The result was the ratio of forces and means on the Polish-German front on 09/01/39, shown in table 3.1:

Table 3.1

RELATION OF FORCES AND MAINTENANCE ON THE POLISH GERMAN FRONT AS OF 01.09.39

Density per kilometer of front

Polish | german

0Z

> about  
and  
me battalions  
Guns

Anti-tank  
212] 506 guns

[Tanks | 91 | 12.62 | 238 ataldo9 Pia  
am

guns

Contra

tank CI

13.7

Infantry  
battalions

tank

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yy

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,37  
,58  
,74  
,29  
,52  
,23  
,06

[066\_

Northern Front  
(East Prussia)

front  
(Pomerania)

©  
!  
>

Northwestern

0.27  
1.54  
0.28  
0.28  
1.17  
0.49

Western Front  
(Silesia)

: 0.34

guns

front  
(Carpathians)

Southwestern

Continuation of the table.

Private  
compound

battalions  
guns  
against  
planes'  
planes"

Sources: [193, 194, 195].

Notes: °  
Fighters and Lines "Including

In accordance with the mobilization plan in Poland, on March 23, 1939, covert partial mobilization of troops began. Formations were strengthened in a number of districts and directorates of four armies and an operational group were created. During August 13-18, 9 more formations were secretly mobilized. And on August 23, the day the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact was signed in Moscow, the covert mobilization of the main forces began. The deployment of Polish troops was carried out in accordance with the operational plan "Khaspu4" ("West"). The main headquarters of the Polish army underestimated the strength and capabilities of Germany and, accordingly, somewhat overestimated their own. Judging by the areas of concentration of armies along the border, the Poles counted not only on defensive actions to hold their territory, but even to advance. In particular, they intended, by strikes in converging directions by forces located in the "Polish Corridor" and along the border with East Prussia, to defeat the grouping of German troops isolated there. However, the Germans managed to strengthen their grouping in this enclave and

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in Pomerania. Considering the prevailing balance of forces and means, this task turned out to be not POWERFUL for the Polish army.

In addition, the Poles, preparing for a positional defense, believed that active operations would unfold only after the complete concentration of the troops of the parties and some period of clashes of forces covering the mobilization and deployment of the main forces. The desire to keep all areas along the perimeter of their border led to the dispersion of their efforts. This was the main defect of the Polish plan of warfare, because since the time of the Prussian king Frederick II, the popular expression has been known: "He who defends everything, defends nothing." More expedient was the option of creating a prepared defense in depth on a less extended front along the banks of the Vistula and Warta rivers. In this case, the Polish army would have had the best chance of holding out until the start of active operations by France and England, and thereby drag out the war. But the Poles preferred to fight on the border, while the French were in no hurry to attack.

Apparently, having received reliable information about the intentions of the Germans to launch an invasion, on August 26, the Polish troops received an order to advance the mobilized formations to the planned areas of concentration. Indeed, as early as 25 August at 15.25 Hitler gave the order to attack Poland at 4.30 am on 26 August. But on the same day at 20.30, he canceled it, having learned about the signing at 17.35 of the same day of an official agreement on mutual assistance between England and Poland in the event of German aggression. Until that moment, there had been only an oral English guarantee to Poland, given on March 31, 1939, which Hitler did not consider serious. The news of the written treaty made him postpone the attack and rethink the situation. The troops barely managed to stop, although at the same time there were several small skirmishes on the border, and one German detachment, which did not receive an order to cancel the offensive, captured the Yablunkovskiy pass. The Poles mistook these incidents for yet another German act of provocation in the "war of nerves" that had long been going on at the borders separating Poland and Germany.

All preparations for hostilities were carried out by the Polish leadership in secret from their English.

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French allies, given their fears that decisive measures by Warsaw might push Germany into war. Therefore, when on the 29th of August a general mobilization was going to be announced in Poland, England and France insisted on postponing it until the 31st of August. However, on August 30, the military command of Poland ordered the armies and operational groups of the first echelon to occupy their starting position. Thanks to covert mobilization, by the morning of September 1, it was possible to complete the main activities of the mobplan by 70%, but many reservists could not arrive in time for their units. Due to various kinds of delays, only about half of the formations of the Polish army managed to reach the areas of operational mission, and even then there was not enough time to fully take up their positions. However, the Polish



aviation managed to disperse to field airfields.

On the afternoon of August 28, Hitler fixed the tentative date for the attack—September 1. On the morning of August 31, he confirmed the date for the start of hostilities - at dawn on September 1, and at 12.40 signed "Directive No. 1 on waging war", in which he set the final time of the attack - 4.45 am on September 1.

The immediate reason for the German attack on Poland was the well-known incident organized by the Nazis in a small German border town [Ileivitz. On the evening of August 31, SS men dressed in Polish uniforms seized the local radio station and broadcast an anti-German proclamation in Polish. A few minutes later they left the scene, leaving the corpses there, dressed in Polish military uniforms. In fact, the dead were, of course, not Poles, but prisoners from German concentration camps, whom the Germans had brought with them. All this was sewn with white thread, but the Nazis cared little about credibility, because on August 22, 1939, Hitler quite frankly told his generals:

"I will give you a propaganda reason for starting a war, but whether it is plausible does not matter. The winner will not be asked later whether he was telling the truth or not. For starting and waging war, it is not the right that matters, but victory. <...> Right is on the side of the strong" [196].

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German Air Force at 4:45 am | September 1939 dealt a massive blow to airfields, communication and communication centers, economic and administrative centers of Poland. At the same time, the Schleswig-Holstein training artillery ship (former battleship), which arrived in Danzig Bay in advance, opened fire on the Polish garrison on the Westerplatte peninsula from 280-mm main battery guns. Simultaneously, German ground forces crossed the border of Poland.

But the fighting in Poland from the very beginning began to develop in a completely different way from what they had planned in Berlin. On all sectors of the front, the Poles put up fierce resistance and, at the first opportunity, went over to counterattacks. One of them was destined to go down in history. It took place on the evening of the first day of the war in the north, in the area of the "Polish corridor".

There, the 18th Lancers Regiment from the Polish Pomeranian Cavalry Brigade opposed units of the German 20th MD. The commander of the regiment, Colonel K. Mastelage, saw an opportunity to quietly bypass the positions of the German infantry in the woods and strike at her rear. The tankettes at his disposal turned out to be out of order, and he led two squadrons, in which there were about

250 fighters, leaving the rest of the forces of his regiment on the defensive. At about 7 pm, the Poles discovered at the edge of the forest a German infantry battalion three times larger than them in number and, taking advantage of surprise, rushed at him in horseback formation in a saber attack. With a decisive onslaught, the lancers dispersed the enemy infantry, but, to their misfortune, several German armored vehicles arrived there in time. Unexpectedly coming under fire from their 20-mm automatic cannons and machine guns, the horsemen were forced to gallop back into the forest, leaving 20-25 dead on the battlefield, including their brave commander. The next day the Germans brought two Italian correspondents to the place of the bloody fight and showed them the corpses of the Polish cavalymen and their horses. But now they told the newspapers not a true story of the battle, but a propaganda fiction, that these lancers were allegedly killed while trying to attack German tanks with sabers. With the light hand of the Italians, the myth of the illiterate and without

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sensible Poles, unfamiliar with the technique and methods of modern warfare, went for walks all over the world and lived happily to this day. Meanwhile, it is easy to refute it, because the German motorized divisions at that time did not have tanks at all, so they could not participate in the battle of the units of the 20th MD against the 18th Lancers.

At the same time, all Polish cavalry brigades were given tankettes and armored vehicles, so their personnel knew well the capabilities of armored vehicles and how to deal with them. And they also had the appropriate means for this struggle: each Polish cavalry regiment with a staff strength of 842 people was armed with 13 quite effective anti-tank rifles for that time and four anti-tank guns [197]. Cavalymen fought, as a rule, on foot, horses were used mainly for marches and fought bravely and staunchly. On September 1, the 18th Lancers lost up to 40% of their personnel in a battle against a numerically superior enemy, but did not withdraw from the battle [198]. Together with the entire Naval Cavalry Brigade, he continued to stubbornly hold back the onslaught of the German motorized units, which significantly outnumbered them and armament, covering the withdrawal of the main forces of the "Pomozhe" army from the "Polish corridor".

General Guderian fought there at the head of the 19th MK, which included the 3rd TD, 2nd and 20th MD. He also contributed to the creation of the myth, writing in his memoirs about how "the Polish Pomeranian cavalry brigade, due to ignorance of the constructive data and methods of action on our tanks, attacked them with melee weapons and suffered monstrous losses." Nevertheless, even Guderian in the same memoirs noted very eloquent facts illustrating the real effect of the actions of the Pomeranian brigade. For example, "<...> the commander of the 2nd motorized division reported after midnight that he was forced to retreat under the onslaught of the Polish

cavalry." Guderian had to personally go to the troops in order to stop the panic that had arisen there [199]. The 2nd MD advanced to the right of the 20th, with which the lancers of Colonel Mastelage fought. It is likely that the panicky rumors about the attacking Polish horsemen were brought there by the fled

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Xia soldiers of the same infantry battalion that fell under their blow.

International events also began to develop not according to the most favorable scenario for the Germans. Contrary to Hitler's hopes and expectations, at 9 a.m. on September 3, the British ambassador presented the German leadership with an ultimatum demanding that they stop the aggression against Wormwood before 11 a.m. and immediately withdraw troops from its territory. The Germans ignored the ultimatum, and England declared war on Germany at 11:15 that same day. At 5 p.m., France followed suit, and a little later, the British dominions. On September 5, the words of KIA entered the war on the side of Germany.

The Poles continued to fight with great dedication and courage, but this was not enough to stop the onslaught of the German mobile troops, supported by air strikes. The Polish defense was cut through by the German tank spearheads, and the troops were forced to retreat in almost all sectors of the front. However, on September 9, a specially created group of three Polish divisions from the Kutno region delivered a sudden blow to the extended battle order of the 30th German infantry division, which covered the left flank of the 8th army advancing on Lodz (see Diagram 2). For the first time since the beginning of the war, the Poles managed to go on the offensive and achieve some success. They imposed on the Germans a bunk battle. Bzu ra. At the same time, there was a threat that large masses of cavalry would come out to the rear of the German tank group that had broken through, advancing from the south. According to General Manstein, "the situation for the German troops in this area took on the character of a crisis. Attempts by the 8th Army to restore the situation with counterattacks were unsuccessful. [200] The plan of the German command to encircle and completely destroy the Polish army west of Warsaw failed. Its main forces managed to avoid encirclement and withdrew beyond the Vistula, where the Polish command expected to regroup its forces and launch a counteroffensive.

The heroic defense of the Westerplatte and Hel peninsulas, Gdynia and Warsaw aroused the admiration of the whole world, and the battle on the Bzura River even Goebbels' mouthpiece - the newspaper Völkischer

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Beobachter" - called "the most violent in history."

The Soviet press kept quiet about all this. On the contrary, from issue to issue, all Soviet newspapers noted that the Poles offered only weak resistance to the Germans. Of course, Germany's unexpectedly strong blow shook the entire system of political and military leadership in Poland. On the very first day of the war, Polish President I. Mościcki left Warsaw. On September 4, the evacuation of government offices began. The next day, the government itself left the capital. In connection with the real threat of a breakthrough to Warsaw by German tanks, the Poles were forced to move their headquarters to Brest. On the night of September 7, the commander-in-chief of the Polish army, Marshal Edward Rydz Smigly, went there with most of the officers of the main headquarters.

The fact is that from the very beginning of hostilities, the real scourge of the Polish command was an acute shortage of communications. According to the pre-war plan, the communications company, intended to serve the Polish main headquarters, was to be prepared for work only on the third day of the war. And on the first day the Poles could count on only a few telephones, a telegraph apparatus and a single radio station. And even that one was very inconvenient for general use, because its receiver was in the personal shelter of Rydz-Smigly, and the transmitter was generally placed away from the headquarters, in the western district of Warsaw, Powazki. This was a precautionary measure so as not to give the Germans the location of the headquarters. To solve the sore communication problem, another radio station was urgently transferred to the Pilsudski Fort, located in the south of the capital. But the large size of the equipment did not allow it to be hidden in a shelter, and on September 2, German aircraft disabled its transmitter as soon as it began to work. After that, the radio station could only receive. It is not surprising that from the very beginning of the war chronic interruptions began in the connection of the Polish command with their armies. For example, already on September 2, negotiations with the Krakow army broke down, and the next day there was no contact with it from noon until nightfall. It was interrupted that day with all the other Polish troops. On September 4, communication with the armies "Poznan" and "Krakow" was cut off, and almost a whole

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money could not be restored. To top it all off, there was a real threat of German tanks breaking through to Warsaw, and they really approached it the very next day after the departure of the Polish leadership.

Brest was not chosen as the location of the headquarters by chance: according to pre-war plans, the Brest Fortress was to become the command post of the entire Polish army in the event of a war with the USSR. But it was not possible to get to that fort of hers, which they began to re-equip for the commander-in-chief, due to the condition of the roads, and the command had to be located in rooms that were completely unsuitable for normal work. Telephone communication for Rydz-Smigly was managed to be established only 12 hours after his arrival in Brest,

and even then only with the army "Lublin" and with the command of the district in Grodno. Later, he managed to briefly contact the headquarters of the Narev Task Force. The radio station urgently transferred by truck from Warsaw to Brest proved to be useless, because the ciphers for it were sent separately, by rail. When they finally arrived, this radio station suffered the same sad fate as the previous one, from Fort Piłsudski. She also did not fit in the shelter, and the Germans bombed her transmitter as soon as it began to work. As a result, only the receiver remained operational for this radio station. Fortunately, they were able to quickly get a short-wave naval radio station to replace her.

During all these ups and downs, the Polish army was actually led for a couple of days not by its official commander-in-chief, Rydz-Smigły, but by the chief of the main staff, General Vatslav Stakhevich, who temporarily stayed in Warsaw with a small group of officers. This handful of people literally collapsed from fatigue, trying to establish at least some kind of command and control, and on September 9 they also left for Brest. Constant German air raids forced on September 10 to transfer the Polish headquarters to Vladimir-Volynsky, on September 13 to Mlynov, and on September 15 to Kolomyia. The loss of command and control in the conditions of the quantitative and qualitative superiority of the Wehrmacht, who had absolute control over the initiative and air supremacy, despite the courage of the soldiers and officers of the Polish army, brought the country to the brink of disaster.

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#### THE INVASION OF THE SOVIET TROOPS ON THE TERRITORY OF POLAND

Moscow closely followed the developments in Europe, hoping to use them to its advantage. The participation of the USSR in the war with Poland was not envisaged by the secret protocol attached to the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact. The eastern regions of Poland went to him without any effort on his part, only for the neutrality benevolent towards the Germans in the outbreak of the Second World War. But the clear threat of the deployment of hostilities in the immediate vicinity of the western border of the USSR required the adoption of appropriate measures to increase the combat readiness of the Red Army. On August 30, the Telegraph Agency of the Soviet Union (TASS) published a message stating that "<...> in view of the aggravation of the situation in the eastern regions of Europe and in view of the possibility of all sorts of surprises, the Soviet command decided to strengthen the numerical strength of the garrisons of the western borders of the USSR."

But in the Red Army even earlier they began to covertly carry out measures to strengthen its combat strength. With the signing of the pact and the impending action of Germany against Poland, the implementation of these measures was accelerated. In the bodies of local military administration (military registration and enlistment offices) and in

military units, the records of assigned personnel, horses, vehicles and tractors were checked and specified. In the military districts, work has intensified on the selection of personnel intended for newly deployed units and formations. Vacations and long business trips of military personnel, the withdrawal of troops to camps, and artillery to training grounds, as requested by some commanders and commanders, were prohibited.

In August 1939, a covert deployment of a group of troops began in the military districts bordering Poland, which was reinforced by artillery and units of other military branches. In accordance with the mobplan in case of war, on the basis of some units, it was planned to return several similar structures to the base. To ensure the transition of troops from the states of peacetime to the states of wartime, an emergency reserve was created

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(NC)'. Its dimensions depended on the deployment multiplicity factor established by the General Staff. For example, if it was equal to three ("troychatka"), then with the announcement of mobilization, this military unit deployed into three similar structures. Thus, in the Byelorussian Military District (BVO), on the basis of three divisions (33rd, 62nd and 29th Rifle Divisions) of triple deployment, nine new divisions and one command of the 24th Rifle Corps were deployed. In addition, the 37th Rifle Division, which had departed to the east, was restored [201]. The staffing of the newly formed units with command cadres was mainly carried out by moving the most trained commanders one step higher. At the same time, difficulties arose with regard to the acquisition of connection controls. A significant number of staff members had to be seconded to the new formations from the existing headquarters of corps and divisions, and partly from the headquarters of the armies. As a result, the main headquarters were weakened, in the departments of which often only 1-2 regular commanders remained, which subsequently had a negative impact on their work. |

According to the plan of organizational measures approved in August 1939, the RGK artillery was to have 17 artillery regiments of high power (b / m) of 36 203-mm howitzers with a personnel strength of 1374 people in each. They were all triple deployment regiments. That is, when a general mobilization was announced, the number of such regiments increased to 51. This was achieved by reducing the fourth divisions in the wartime regiments and the corresponding reduction in the number of guns in the regiment to 18. In order to ensure deployment in the "basic" units, the necessary number of weapons, stocks of all kinds, and the corresponding personnel were trained.

For example, in the 120th GAP of the b / m RGK of the Kharkov Military District, there were almost 1.5 times more junior

The need for NZ was calculated on the basis of a mobilization deployment scheme, which included formations and units maintained in peacetime and transferred to wartime states, as well as formed in the first month of the war. The use of NZ in peacetime was strictly prohibited.

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commanders than in the usual linear part (due to over conscripts). In August 1939, on the basis of divisions of this regiment, two new howitzer regiments were deployed: the 375th, which received 152-mm howitzers, and the 120th, which got 203-mm howitzers "Midveil-UT" (type U J) sample 1916! These howitzers were in service with the old Russian army. After the formation, these units were transferred by rail to the Belarusian military district. At the same time, the 120th Artillery Regiment continued to exist in the Kharkov Military District until the middle of 1940, which was used to train personnel for other artillery units of the army RGK.

However, as experience has shown, when deploying three new artillery regiments from one artillery regiment, the degree of their readiness to perform combat missions sharply decreased. For example, deployed in connection with the upcoming events, the 350th artillery regiment of the b / m RGK immediately before being sent to the Belarusian Special Military District? received new 203 mm B-4 howitzers. Acceptance of guns was carried out directly on the railway platforms. Most of the commanding staff of the regiment of the new materiel and the issues of its application did not know, not to mention the rest of the personnel. Therefore, in the future, the "troika" was abandoned, since it was then beyond the power to provide such a number of regiments with guns, traction and other property, as well as trained specialists.

In connection with the outbreak of hostilities between Germany and Poland in the USSR, the implementation of previously planned measures to increase the combat readiness of the troops of the border districts was accelerated. From 8 pm on September 2, combat readiness was declared in all border detachments on the Soviet-Polish border and a regime of its enhanced protection was introduced. People's Commissar of Defense

' According to data requiring clarification, three new regiments were formed on the basis of the 120th Gap of the KhVO, including the 360th Gap of the b / m RGK, which was armed with 203-mm B-4 howitzers.

? On November 1, 1936, the VRKKA had 50 such howitzers (not counting one training one). They were in service in the USSR and England until 1943, and in Finland they were stored in a warehouse until the end of the 60s.

\* Since July 1938, the border Belorussian and Kiev military districts, in view of their special importance, began to be called special (BOVO and KOVO, respectively).

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On September 4, the USSR issued an order to delay for one month the dismissal of Red Army soldiers and junior commanders in the troops of the Leningrad, Moscow, Kalinin, Kharkov military districts, BOVO and KOVO (this order concerned 310.6 thousand people). At the same time, a call was made for training camps for assigned members of air defense units in four military districts (LVO, KalVO, BOVO and KOVO), which made it possible to increase their composition by 26,014 people.

On September 7, 1939, from 7 o'clock in the morning, parts of seven military districts (Orlovsky was added to the six listed above) received an order to begin "Large training camps" (hereinafter - BUS) with the call of assigned staff to all military units and institutions of the districts. A covert mobilization of conscripts, horses and equipment from the national economy began. The mobilization of units was carried out in accordance with the provisions of the mobilization plan of the Red Army for 1938-1939. MP-22, approved by the Defense Committee on November 29, 1937. However, in some formations, covert mobilization began earlier under the guise of checking the reality of mobplanes. Thus, the mobilization of the 121st and 143rd rifle divisions at the expense of the cadre of the 33rd division of the BOVO began on September 5 and ended on the 15th [202].

The chairmen of the governments of the union and autonomous republics and the corresponding regional executive committees were told that the military units stationed on their territory were recruiting assigned personnel, motor vehicles, horses and carts for training camps, and that they needed to be given every possible assistance. At the same time, it was clarified that the summons of the henchmen is carried out strictly according to subpoenas without being published in the press. As we will see below, excessive secrecy played a bad joke on the staffing of the units that became part of the army in the field, especially the rear and support units.

The official Soviet history of the Second World War hypocritically asserts that "the USSR, despite the hostile attitude of the bourgeois-landlord government of Poland towards it, took steps to help its neighbor in such a difficult situation" [203]. And what was this help? Poland was offered to buy from the Soviet Union the goods it desperately needed, in

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particularly sanitary materials. At the same time, the Soviet leadership refused military supplies to the Poles, referring to the policy of neutrality declared by the USSR. The transit of military materials to Poland from other countries through Soviet territory was also prohibited.



Documents testify that the political leaders of Germany and the USSR on the eve and with the beginning of the Hitlerite aggression worked in close contact. The following facts testify to how the Soviet leadership actually observed the policy of neutrality. Already on the first day of the war at 11 a.m., the German embassy in Moscow, informing Molotov of its beginning and the annexation of Danzig to Germany, immediately conveyed the request of the Chief of the General Staff of the German Air Force. The Germans asked the radio station in Minsk to repeat the word "Minsk" as often as possible during the transmission of its program, which the Luftwaffe pilots could use as a radio beacon. The Soviet side agreed to this, rejecting another German proposal to transfer special call signs for this purpose.

A large number of German merchant and passenger ships were at sea or in foreign ports by the time England entered the war. This meant their imminent death, since the British would not miss the opportunity to intercept them when trying to return to their country. The Soviet government here also met Germany halfway and agreed to their entry into Murmansk. All German ships in the North Atlantic were ordered to proceed to this ice-free port, keeping as much northerly as possible. In the first days of the war, 18 German ships took advantage of this permit, among which was the largest and fastest German ocean liner, the Bremen. Moscow also guaranteed the subsequent transportation of their goods to Leningrad and then to Germany.

After the entry into the war of England and France, the speed of the operation to defeat Poland acquired even greater significance. Hitler most of all feared a war on two fronts. The danger of the French army going on the offensive in the Ruhr industrial region, key to the German economy, was quite real. Therefore, it was important not to let the fighting in Poland drag on. Germanic

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the embassy in Moscow made an attempt to probe the intentions of the USSR regarding a possible action of the Red Army against Poland. On the evening of September 3, Ribbentrop, through the German ambassador in Moscow, Schulenburg, first proposed to the Soviet leadership to send their troops to Poland:

"We certainly hope to completely defeat the Polish army within a few weeks. Then we will keep under military occupation the areas which, as established in Moscow, fall within the German sphere of interest. However, it is clear that, for military reasons, we will then have to act against those Polish military forces that by that time will be in Polish territories within the Russian sphere of interest.

Please discuss this with Molotov immediately and

see if the Soviet Union does not consider it desirable that the Russian army should move at the right moment against the Polish forces in the Russian sphere of interest and, for its part, occupy this territory. In our opinion, this would not only help us, but also, in accordance with the Moscow agreements, it would also be in the Soviet interests" [204].

After 2 days, Molotov carefully answered this request:

"We agree with you that at the appropriate time it will be absolutely necessary for us to begin concrete action. We believe, however, that this time has not yet come. Perhaps we are mistaken, but it seems to us that excessive haste can harm us and help to unite our enemies" [205].

Stalin expected that the war in Europe would be as long and cruel as the war of 1914-1918, and continued to consistently pursue the same policy of waiting. This is convincingly evidenced by his words, set out in the diary entry of the General Secretary of the Executive Committee of the Comintern G.M. Dimitrov. He made it on September 7, 1939, immediately after a meeting in the Kremlin with Stalin, Molotov and Zhdanov:

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"<...> - The war is going on between two groups of capitalist countries (poor and rich in terms of colonies, raw materials, etc.)

For the redivision of the world, for domination over the world!

"<...> — We are not averse to them having a good fight and weakening each other.

- Not bad if the position of the richest capitalist countries (especially England) was shaken by the hands of Germany.

"Hitler, without understanding or wanting to do this, shakes and undermines the capitalist system.

<...> We can maneuver, push one side against the other in order to better tear ourselves apart.

- The Non-Aggression Pact helps Ger to some extent mania.

"Next moment push the other side.

"The Communists of the capitalist countries must come out resolutely against their governments, against the war."

[206].

It would seem that the usual statement of a statesman about the war that broke out between the potential enemies of his country. Its unusualness lies in the fact that it was hidden from the public then and after the end of the Second World War, as it contradicted the myth of the peace-loving policy of the Soviet Union. This statement by Stalin is quite in line with the well-known public and very frank statement by US Senator G. Truman, which he made on June 23, 1941, about the German war against the USSR:

"If we see that Germany is winning, then we should help Russia, and if Russia is winning, then we should help Germany, and thus let them kill as many as possible, although I do not want Hitler to win under any circumstances." (The highlighted part of the senator's phrase was usually omitted in our country during the Cold War YEARS. - Auth.) [207]. This statement by Truman was used by Soviet propaganda (and some people even now) where necessary and not necessary, as an example of the greatest impudence of cynicism.

Describing Poland as a fascist state oppressing other nationalities, Stalin declared that "uni

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The destruction of this state under present conditions would mean one less bourgeois fascist state! What would be bad if, as a result of the defeat of Poland, we spread the socialist system to new territories and populations" [208]. In the first half of September, the foreign Communist Parties received a corresponding directive from the Comintern, which noted that "the real war is imperialist, in which the bourgeoisie of all belligerent states is equally guilty." Therefore, the working class, and even more so the Communist Parties, cannot support this war. Moreover, "the international proletariat cannot under any circumstances defend fascist Poland, which has rejected the help of the Soviet Union, which oppresses other nationalities" [209].

And Hitler was interested in the fact that the Soviet troops invaded Poland as soon as possible: this would facilitate the fulfillment of tasks by the German troops and bring their victory closer. In addition, he hoped that the action of the USSR would automatically make him an ally of Germany, since England and France would be forced to declare war on the Soviet Union as well. In this direction, the German side additionally took a number of steps, including the false report on September 8 that Warsaw had been taken by the Germans. In response to this statement, Molotov asked the German embassy in Moscow to convey his congratulations and greetings to the German government and on the same day assured Ambassador Schulenburg that Soviet hostilities would begin at that time.

the next few days [210].

The next day, the Military Councils of the BOVO and KOVO received an order by the end of September 11, 1939, to secretly concentrate troops near the border and be ready for a decisive offensive with the aim of defeating the opposing enemy troops with a lightning strike. In particular, the 4th Army was to operate in the direction of Baranovichi and, by the end of September 13, reach the Snov-Zhilichi front. However, it soon became known that Warsaw was not occupied by the Germans, and the advance of the French began on the Franco-German border.

Indeed, the advance detachment of the German 4th TD on September 8 at 17.00 reached the southeastern outskirts of Warsaw, and the Germans considered the job done. But the Poles put up unexpectedly stubborn resistance, and the capital of Poland then withstood.

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French troops to the Siegfried Line. It also turned out that the mobilization and deployment of Soviet troops intended for the "liberation" of the fraternal peoples of Western Belarus and Western Ukraine took more time than planned. Therefore, the order was not brought to the attention of the troops, and the time of crossing the state border was postponed indefinitely.

In Poland, in the event of a war with the USSR, an operational plan "Ÿ5sBo4" ("East") was developed, in which the grouping of our troops in the border districts was quite accurately revealed, including the number of rifle, cavalry and tank corps. The Poles estimated the number of tanks in service with the Red Army at 19,300 [211]. Pretty close to the truth assumption, because before 1939, 22,590 tanks were delivered to the Red Army, and in 1939 - even 3034 [212]. In general, the Poles had good intelligence, which accounted for many achievements. For example, they made a very significant contribution to unraveling the secret of the German Enigma cipher machine. But the Poles could not even imagine that the USSR and Germany would conspire behind their backs. However, not only they.

In the USSR in the prewar years, Poland was constantly regarded as a serious potential enemy. Its armed forces were carefully studied, appropriate plans were drawn up, and the commanding officers were forced to learn the Polish language without fail. Conducted command-staff and military exercises at various levels, including live firing. Firearms teacher of the Leningrad Infantry School, Honored Master of Sports in bullet shooting N.V. Bogdanov participated in one of them, which was of an experimental nature. Two pairs of snipers were posted against the advancing reinforced Polish infantry company. The enemy was designated 129 targets exactly according to the staff of the company - from the commander to the last carrier of cartridges. In a short time, our snipers hit over 90% of mi-

sheny.

' The report about the capture of Warsaw turned out to be false. It is possible that it was not a matter of an erroneous assessment of the report of the commander of the 4th Panzer Division: the Germans simply wanted to push Stalin to enter Poland as soon as possible.

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But in connection with the outbreak of the war, the Polish armed forces were almost in full force against the Germans. Therefore, for the Red Army, the Polish army was no longer a serious enemy, and it was possible to boldly launch an invasion without waiting for the full deployment and concentration of the entire grouping of Soviet troops. But Stalin delayed his speech - it was more profitable to observe the course of hostilities from the side. Moreover, the hidden mobilization really took place slowly and disorganized. However, the main reason for the delay was different: in no case did Stalin want to be involved in the war too early as a result of imprudent actions. Therefore, he waited for a suitable pretext for entering Poland.

At 4 pm on September 10, Molotov invited Schulenburg to his place and declared that the Red Army had been taken by surprise by the rapid successes of the Wehrmacht in Poland and was not yet ready for action. The Soviet military authorities counted on several weeks of preparation and therefore found themselves in a difficult position. At the same time, Molotov informed Schulenburg that more than three million people had already been mobilized. Touching on the political side of the matter, he noted that "the Soviet government intended to take advantage of the further advance of the German troops and declare that Poland was falling to pieces and that, as a result, the Soviet Union should come to the aid of the Ukrainians and Belarusians who were threatened by [Germany. This pretext will make the intervention of the Soviet Union plausible in the eyes of the masses and will give the Soviet Union the opportunity not to look like an aggressor" [213].

And the deadlines for the transfer of many units to the wartime states really were not kept. The assigned staff arrived late and not at full strength: there were too many "dead souls" among the accounted for the assigned staff. In the course of mobilization, the weak and uncoordinated work of the military commissariats was revealed. In many of them, the re-registration of those liable for military service has not been carried out since 1927. In addition, many conscripts did not correspond to the declared military specialties (VUS). First of all, this concerned the most qualified specialists. The accounting of horses, wagons,

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harnesses and vehicles. Many shortcomings in the work of military registration and enlistment offices were explained by the arrests of specialists carried out in the 30s, who were declared "pests" and "enemies of the people." At the same time, continuity in complex and time-consuming work was disrupted.

Worst of all was the situation with motor and tractor equipment, which arrived from the national economy. Cars and tractors in the country were subject to strict accounting, and the heads of enterprises and farms had the appropriate instructions in the event that mobilization was announced. But the operation of auto-tractor equipment in the national economy was organized very badly, timely current and restoration repairs of equipment assigned for delivery to military units in the event of mobilization were not established. The directors of the MTS and the auto farms criminally reacted to the implementation of the mob plan, sending cars and tractors that were unfit for their technical condition and lacking tools, leaving the least worn ones in the farm. The mobilized drivers, justifying themselves, claimed that they had been sent to the training camp in order to be sent from there for a major overhaul.

We were aware of the problems in this regard. Back at the end of November 1938, in his speech at the Military Council under the People's Commissar of Defense of the USSR, the commander of the 5th mechanized corps M.P. Petrov reported on the results of one of the exercises of his unit:

"In the presence of 60% of the materiel, we were able to raise only 25% of the part on a combat alert. The bottleneck was our rear. Most of the transport vehicles received from the national economy turned out to be useless. There were no springs, no tires, and some of the cars that arrived had wooden wheels wrapped in hay" [214].

A commission was created, which was instructed to submit by February 15, 1939, a list of specific measures to correct the discovered shortcomings [215]. But such a complex problem could not be solved in a short time. It was not resolved even by the beginning of the war.

A particularly difficult situation was created in artillery regiments converted to mechanized traction. In September 1939 accounted for

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to observe how a vast square in the middle of the military camp of the 184th GAP in the city of Klinty suddenly turned out to be crowded with tractors of various brands, mainly from the Chelyabinsk Tractor Plant (ChTZ). A significant part of them required medium and even major repairs. Repairmen spent days on the spot trying to revive them, but there were not enough spare parts and tools. As a result, mechanized artillery regiments had to use tractors of various systems, which, moreover, worked on various types of tractors.

fuel. Due to the shortage of rubber for vehicles, on September 10, the People's Commissar of Defense was forced to ask the government to unbook 50% of the rubber reserves in the military districts conducting the BUS to provide vehicles coming from the national economy (about 8 thousand sets), which was still clearly not enough.

On September 11, on the basis of BOVO and KOVO, the departments of the Belorussian Front were formed and deployed, headed by the commander of the 2nd rank M.P. Kovalev and the Ukrainian Front, commanded by the commander | rank S.K. Timoshen co. The directorates of 22 rifle, 5 cavalry and 3 tank corps, 98 rifle and 14 cavalry divisions, 28 tank and 3 motorized rifle brigades were involved in the implementation of measures for the CSI [216]. In total, 2,610,136 people, 634,000 horses, 117,400 vehicles and 18,900 tractors were drafted into the Red Army and Navy [217]. This made it possible by September 15 to form six armies on the basis of the previously existing army groups. As part of the Belorussian Front: 3rd (commander - Corps Commander V.I. Kuznetsov), 4th (Divisional Commander V.I. Chuikov) and 11th (Divisional Commander N.V. Medvedev), as well as a horse-mechanized group (KMG) (room correspondent V.I. Boldin). In addition, the control of the 10th Army (corporal commander I.G. Zakharkin) was transferred to the front from the control of the Moscow Military District. As part of the Ukrainian Front, the 5th (commander I.G. Sovetnikov), 6th (corporate commander F.I. Golikov) and 12th (commander 2nd rank I.V. Tyulenev) armies were formed.

For an uninterrupted supply of the newly formed associations, mobilization stocks of food and grain forage had to be unbooked. From 18.00 on September 12 in order to ensure the transportation of personnel and stocks of materiel on the railways of the European part

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countries have put in place a military schedule, reducing civilian traffic accordingly. Representatives of the Council of People's Commissars for the unloading of goods were appointed to a number of railways. However, the railroads did not handle the transportation well, and the schedule was disrupted. This is partly why, simultaneously with the beginning of the invasion, the NKVD railway guards in the districts involved were transferred to the military.

new position.

On September 14, Molotov told Schulenburg that, given the political motivation of the Soviet action (the fall of Poland and the defense of the Russian "minorities"), it would be extremely important not to start acting before the capital of Poland, Warsaw, fell. In this regard, he asked to be informed as accurately as possible when he could count on the capture of Warsaw. But Ribbentrop continued to insistently ask the Soviet People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs Molotov about the date for the entry of the Red Army into Poland. On September 15 he writes to Schulenburg:

"1. The annihilation of the Polish army, as follows from the martial law review of September 14, which has already been handed to you, is rapidly being completed. We expect to occupy Warsaw within the next few days.

2. We have already stated to the Soviet government that we consider ourselves bound by demarcated spheres of interest agreed upon in Moscow and standing apart from purely military activities, which of course also extends to the future.

3. From the message given to you by Molotov on September 14, we concluded that militarily the Soviet government was prepared and that it intended to begin its operations now. We welcome this.

The Soviet government, thus, will free us from the need to destroy the remnants of the Polish army, pursuing them up to the Russian border <...> (emphasis added. - Auth.).

4. For the purpose of political support for the action of the Soviet army, we propose the publication of a joint communiqué with the following content:

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"In view of the complete collapse of the form of government that previously existed in Poland, the imperial government and the government of the USSR considered it necessary to put an end to the further intolerable political and economic situation that exists in the Polish territories. They consider it their common duty to restore peace and tranquility in these territories, which are of natural interest to them [Germany and the USSR], and to establish a new order there by drawing natural boundaries and creating viable economic institutions." X

5. By proposing such a communique, we mean that the Soviet government has already cast aside the idea expressed by Molotov in a previous conversation with you that the basis for Soviet action is the threat to the Ukrainian and Belorussian population coming from Germany. Indication of a motive of this kind is an impossible action (emphasis added by us. - Auth.). It is in direct opposition to real German aspirations, which are limited exclusively to well-known German vital interests. It also contradicts the agreements reached in Moscow, and, finally, contrary to the desire expressed by both sides to have friendly relations, it will present both states to the whole world as enemies.

6. Since military operations must be completed as soon as possible in connection with the coming season, we will be grateful if the Soviet government will appoint the day and hour at which its troops will begin the offensive<...> With a view to the necessary coordination of military operations <...> we offer



convene a conference in Bialystok by air <..." [216].

Thus, Moscow's attempt to explain its intervention as a German threat to the Belarusian and Ukrainian population caused a sharply negative reaction from Berlin. Running a little ahead, we note that in this respect we had to make concessions to the Germans.

On September 14, Soviet troops received an offensive order with corresponding changes in the time for performing combat missions. Despite numerous difficulties, by September 15, the troops of both fronts had basically completed their mobilization and concentrated in their initial positions.

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areas near the border with Poland. On the night of September 15, the command and headquarters of the BOVO moved from Smolensk to Minsk. At 4.20 on September 15, the Military Council of the Belorussian Front issued combat order No. 01.

By this time, the 4th Army, which was to operate in the Brest direction, included the 8th, 143rd, 55th and 122nd rifle divisions, the 29th and 32nd tank brigades, the 120th and 350th gap b / m RGK, 5th division of armored trains (BEPO). The army was supported by the 4th Fighter Aviation Regiment [219]. Only the 8th and 143rd rifle divisions, the 29th and 32nd tank brigades, which were to operate in the first echelon, entered the initial areas for the offensive in the 4th Army. According to the intelligence of the 4th Army, the strip to the river. Shchara was not occupied by Polish troops, and the border guard battalions are weak in their combat training and combat readiness and are not able to offer serious resistance. Therefore, it was believed that the forces of the first echelon were sufficient to defeat the border guard units in a short time and capture the prepared Polish fortified areas before they were occupied by field troops. A similar situation was in the zone of operations of other armies of both fronts.

Hitler continued to persistently push Stalin to enter the war as soon as possible. The text of Ribbentrop's urgent telegram, received in Moscow on September 15, said: "If Russian intervention is not launched, the question will inevitably arise whether a political vacuum will not be created in the area lying to the east of the German zone of influence" [220]. But the Germans were not limited only to diplomatic steps: in the afternoon of September 14, the German 19th MK G. Guderian captured the city of Brest. On September 15, the command of the Army Group "North" ordered the advanced units of the corps to go to the Slonim-Baranovichi area. The latter was only 50 km from the Soviet-Polish border. On September 16, formations of the 3rd Army, advancing from the north, in the Vlodava region, connected with the troops of the 10th Army, closing the encirclement

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On the Soviet-Polish border, except for 25 battalions and 7 squadrons of the border guard, with a total number of about 12 thousand people, there were practically no other troops.

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the main forces of the Polish army east of Warsaw. The Polish garrison of the Brest Fortress under the command of General K. Plisovsky continued to repel German attacks for some time, but, having suffered heavy losses, on the night of September 17 was forced to leave the citadel and withdraw towards Terespol. In the morning, German intelligence discovered the absence of the enemy, and the Germans occupied the Brest Fortress. Along the way, the advanced units of Guderian's corps advanced to Zhabinka station (26 km east of Brest), where they immediately defeated the Polish tank unit while unloading its tanks from railway platforms. The line of greatest advance of the German troops passed east of the cities of Bialystok, Brest, Lvov (see Diagram 2).

Berlin's transparent hints, backed up by the resolute actions of the German troops, were understood by Moscow. On the evening of September 16, Molotov informed Schulenburg about the decision of the Soviet government to intervene in Polish affairs. On the same day, Schulenburg, by urgent telegram No. 371, reported the conversation with Molotov to Berlin:

"<...> Molotov declared that the military intervention of the Soviet Union would probably take place tomorrow or the day after tomorrow. Stalin is currently consulting with the military leaders, and this evening, in the presence of Molotov, he will indicate to me the day and hour of the Soviet offensive.

Molotov added that <...> there was no longer any need for a joint communiqué; the Soviet government intends to motivate its actions as follows: the Polish state has collapsed and no longer exists, therefore all agreements concluded with Poland are annulled; third powers may try to capitalize on the resulting chaos; The Soviet Union considers it its duty to intervene to protect its Ukrainian and Belarusian brothers and to enable this unfortunate population to work in peace" [221].

Molotov was forced to admit that the pretext for the invasion planned by the Soviet government contained a note that was offensive to the feelings of the Germans, and decided to CLEARLY:

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"<...> taking into account the difficult for the Soviet pra-

government situation, not to let such trifles get in our way, the Soviet government, unfortunately, did not see any other pretext, since until now the Soviet Union did not worry about its minorities in Poland (emphasis added) and had to, one way or another, to justify their current interference abroad" [222].

In order to provide propaganda for the planned action, the Pravda newspaper on the same day published an article by A.A. Zhdanov, in which the main reasons for the defeat of Poland were the oppression of the Ukrainian and Belarusian national minorities. The anti-Polish campaign was intensified in the Soviet press. It has been argued that Poland is effectively occupied and the whereabouts of its government is unknown. "The question may arise," the editors of the Soviet officialdom asked, "why the Polish army does not offer any resistance to the Germans? This is because Poland is not a one-national country. Only 60% of the population are Poles, the rest are Ukrainians, Belarusians and Jews <...>. Eleven million Ukrainians and Belarusians lived in Poland in a state of national oppression <...>. The Polish government pursued a policy of forced Polonization <...>". Therefore, they say, no one wants to fight for such a country. Through the political agencies of the Red Army, measures were taken to train the personnel of the troops in the appropriate spirit. For this, the circulation of Red Army newspapers in the districts conducting the BUS was increased, and the circulation of central newspapers for distribution in parts

At 2 a.m. on September 17, Stalin received Schulenburg and, in the presence of Molotov and Voroshilov, announced that the Red Army would cross the border with Poland at 6 a.m. Stalin asked Schulenburg to convey to Berlin that German planes would not fly east of the Belostok-Brest-Lvov line, and read out a note prepared for transmission to the Polish ambassador in Moscow. In the original text of the official Soviet note, the entry of the Red Army into Poland was justified by the fact that the Ukrainians and Belarusians there were in danger of being under the yoke.

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"Polish lords under the conditions of the fascist occupation regime" [223].

But to the German Ambassador Schulenburg, to whom Stalin read this note even before it was published, such a wording seemed unacceptable. In response to Schulenburg's objections, Stalin had to change the note at the last moment to make it suitable for the Germans. After Stalin's amendment, it became like this: "The Soviet government cannot also be indifferent to the fact that the consanguineous Ukrainians and Belarusians living on the territory of Poland, left to the mercy of fate, remain defenseless." In addition, in order to satisfy

In response to the requests of the German ambassador, two more paragraphs of the note [224] were reworked in a similar way. Thus, the Soviet version of the reasons why the Red Army crossed the Polish border was agreed personally by Stalin with Schulenburg and edited in accordance with his wishes. [the German ambassador in his report to Berlin from methyl:

"<...> The draft read to me contained three points that were unacceptable to us. In response to my objections, Stalin changed the text with the utmost readiness so that now the note fully satisfies us" [225].

At 3.15 am on September 17, this note was handed over to the Polish ambassador [Rzhibovsky. It stated that:

"<...> The Polish-German war revealed the internal inconsistency of the Polish state. <...> Warsaw, as the capital of Poland, no longer exists. The Polish government has collapsed and shows no signs of life. This means that the Polish state and its government actually ceased to exist. Thus, the treaties concluded between the USSR and Poland ceased to be valid. Left to itself and left without leadership, Poland has turned into a convenient field for all sorts of accidents and surprises that could pose a threat to the USSR. Therefore, being hitherto neutral, the Soviet government can no longer be indifferent to these facts <...>. The Soviet government cannot be indifferent to the fact that

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so that half-blooded Ukrainians and Belarusians living on the territory of Poland, left to the mercy of fate, remain defenseless.

In view of this situation, the Soviet government issued an order to the High Command of the Red Army to order the troops to cross the border and take under their protection the lives and property of the population of Western Ukraine and Western Belarus" [226].

Not everything in this note corresponded to the truth. Let's say the Polish government was in the town of Kutý near the Romanian border and was still giving orders to its troops. And the capital of Poland was completely captured by the Germans only on September 27th. And here is how the current situation was presented to the Soviet people in the official Soviet history of the war:

"Under these conditions, the Soviet government was forced to carry out diplomatic and military actions in order to protect the population of Western Ukraine and Western Belarus from fascist enslavement. <...> and prevent

further advancement of Hitlerite aggression to the east" [227]. It is this version, removed from the Soviet note by Stalin to suit German requirements, that is still used by some publicists...

By the end of September 16, the grouping of troops of the Belorussian and Ukrainian fronts consisted of 15 corps (8 rifle, 5 cavalry and 2 tank!) consisting of 34 divisions (including 21 rifle, 13 cavalry), 16 tank and 2 motorized brigades and the Dnieper military flotilla (DVF) [228]. The size of the grouping on September 17 is shown in Table 3.2.

It should be borne in mind that by the time of the invasion, the composition of the tank units was less than the regular one. So, on 09/15/41, the 32nd light brigade had 228 tanks and self-propelled guns, including: 198 T-26 tanks, 4 T-37, 9 T-38, 13 BHM (combat chemical vehicles) and 4 SU-5; in the 29 brigade - 172, a total of 400 tanks. Each brigade had a link of aircraft for communications and reconnaissance - 3 U-2s.

' By the way, the Poles in their assessment correctly determined the total number of corps and the approximate number of tanks in two tank corps - 1500 units.

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Table 3.2

#### GROUPING AND NUMBERS OF THE SOVIET TROOPS OF THE TWO FRONTS BY SEPTEMBER 17, 1939

p:  
nii composition and mortars

Belorussian front 4 sc:  
50 and 27 sd 121968

5 sd; 24 cd; 22 and 25 brigade 16  
sk: 2 and 100 sd 90  
000 \* 520 \* - Zkk: 7  
and 36 cd; 6 tbr 5 sk: 4i 13 sd  
kmg [6046 and Pk  
65 595 1234 834

15 tk: 2, 21 and 27 brigade; 20  
mbr

10 A I sk: 6, ZZi 121 sd 42 135 330 28 8th sd; 29 and  
32 tbr 40 365 | 184 | 508 paviE Det. 23 sc: 52 with  
DWF" [18549141 [28 |

378 610

Ukrainian front

15 sc: 60, 87 and 45 sd RR

635 522

8th sc: | 8th sc: 81 and 44 sd; 36 t6r | about 9% 6

and 97 sd; 10 and 38 tbr E bi M4 |

834 g and kk: 3, 5

and 2nd kk: 3, 5 and 14 cd; 24 brig.

13th sc: chi 4th

32 and 34 [4th kk: 32 and 34 cd; 26 brigade | Kii Kotor M

o 1133

eh

| 25th shopping mall: 4th and 5th brigade; 1st mbr

IA G: 7\$

7\$ ") o zo

617 588

about (466 516""")

Source: [229].

Notes: The

data in the table is calculated. Statewide in the 29th and 32nd tank brigs  
Yes, there were 254 tanks each.

"Data on the WFS has not been established.

`\*`

Actually took part in September 1939.

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The air forces of the fronts, taking into account the 1st, 2nd and 3rd special  
aviation armies relocated to their territory, numbered 3298 aircraft [230].

It makes no sense to calculate the ratio of forces and means: the main  
forces of the Polish army fought against the Germans.

At 5.00 on September 17, the troops of the two fronts, without waiting for  
complete concentration, advanced formations of mobile troops (tank and  
cavalry) crossed the border

tsu Polyshi along its entire length from Polotsk to Kamenetz-Podolsk. Special groups of border guards and forward detachments of divisions of the first echelon quickly neutralized the Polish border guard. Intelligence data about the absence of significant groupings of Polish troops in the eastern part of the country were confirmed. This allowed our troops to move in the indicated directions, mainly in marching columns. From the Minsk region to Bialystok, the KMG was advancing as part of the 6th Cavalry (Comcor A.I. Eremenko) and the 15th Tank Corps. Formations of the 10th Army advanced behind them. In the direction of Polotsk, Vilna (Vilnius) the troops of the 3rd Army operated, from Slutsk to Brest - the 4th (see Diagram 3).

For the Polish leadership, the invasion of Soviet troops on September 17 turned out to be completely unexpected. Information about their strengthening near the border, received from the beginning of September, was perceived as an understandable reaction to the outbreak of war in Europe. Faced with a fait accompli. Commander-in-Chief Rydz-Smigly, who was in Kutny (Poland), gave the order to the troops:

"The Soviets have invaded. I order a withdrawal to Rumania and Hungary. Do not conduct hostilities with the Soviets, only in the event of an attempt on their part to disarm our units. The task for Warsaw and Modlin, which must defend themselves against the Germans, is unchanged. The units, to which the Soviets have approached, must negotiate with them in order to withdraw the garrisons to Romania or Hungary "[231].

The most combat-ready units of the Polish army were shackled by battles with the Germans. Minor resistance

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The Red Army was rendered mainly by parts of the corps of the border guards. The rest of the Polish units, disorganized by the sudden invasion of Soviet troops, in accordance with the order, with rare exceptions, did not offer resistance.

While the troops of the 3rd and 11th armies were moving into the northeastern part of Poland, the 6th cavalry corps from the KMG crossed the river by the end of the first day of the operation. Wushu, and the 5th Rifle Corps reached the line of the Baranovichi-Stolbtsy railway. The advance detachment of the 11th cd occupied Novogrudok, and the 15th tank corps approached Slonim.

At the front of the 4th Army, units of the 29th brigade, after crossing the state border, had 1/3-1/4 refueling. In order to complete the task and capture the Baranovichi SD on the move, it was necessary to refuel the 1st and 2nd companies of the tank battalions at the expense of the 3rd. Already by the end of September 17, the brigade without much difficulty captured the important road junction of the city of Baranovichi and

a fortified area located near this city, and the 8th Rifle Division advanced to Snov (Snov, 25 km east of Baranovichi). By the end of September 18, the 29th and 32nd tank brigades reached the river. Shchara south of Slonim, and the 8th Rifle Division passed Baranovichi. By the end of September 19, the 29th brigade, having traveled 70 km in 3.5 hours, entered Pruzhany, the 32nd reached Minka on the Baranovichi-Brest highway, and the 8th brigade - the river. Schara. At this time, the 143rd Rifle Division was marching south. By the evening of September 20, the 29th Tank Brigade was west of Pruzhany, the 32nd Tank Brigade was in Kobrin, the 8th Rifle Division was in Ruzhany, and the 143rd Rifle Division was in Ivatsevichi. In less than two years, all these points will be mentioned again in military reports, but in reverse order ...

In 12 days, Soviet troops advanced 250-350 km (see Diagram 3). As a rule, they did not meet with serious resistance, apart from the fighting for Lvov, Drohobych, Stry and Bialystok. The local population basically greeted our units with bread and salt and flowers. And yet, in some places, patriotic soldiers and local residents from among the Poles opposed the Soviet troops with weapons in their hands.

Only in some cases did serious battles have to be fought. For example, the city of Grodno was captured only after

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how many days of stubborn fighting. The first attacks of the cavalry corps of brigade commander A.I. Eremenko were reflected. Only with the approach of parts of the tank corps I.E. Petrov's resistance was broken, and on the night of September 22, the Polish defenders of Grodno left the city. In the morning it was occupied by the Soviet units, for whom the battles for the city cost 57 killed, 159 wounded, 19 tanks and 4 armored vehicles were knocked out [232].

In the battle near Shatsk! On September 30, the infantry of the 52nd SD, operating at the junction of the Belorussian Front with the Ukrainian, began to retreat at night under the onslaught of a large detachment of Poles, without informing the artillery. The 1st division of the 208th gap and the battery of the 158th artillery regiment of the division were surrounded by Poles. Only thanks to the heroism of the assistant chief of staff of the artillery division, senior lieutenant Zotov and one junior commander, who personally stood up to the guns and opened intense direct fire, was it possible to stop the enemy. And then, with the support of 1/208 gap fire, the enemy was thrown back to its original position. As a result of the battle, the Poles from the 5,000-strong detachment lost only about 700 people killed, mostly from artillery fire [233].

According to other sources, in the battle near Shatsk, the Poles left 524 corpses on the battlefield, 1,100 people were taken prisoner, trophies were captured: 500 rifles, 34 machine guns, 60,000 cartridges, 4 wagons of shells and 23 boxes of explosives. The remnants of the Polish detachment at about 16.30 on September 30 crossed the Western Bug River. Our troops lost 81 people killed, 184 wounded (including the divisional commander Colonel I. Rus-



Siyanov). 5 T-26 and 2 T-38 tanks, 2 tractors and 3 anti-tank guns were hit [234].

The troops of the Ukrainian Front also advanced, encountering almost no organized resistance from the Poles. It is characteristic that in the zone of the 6th Army at 4.00 on September 17 (an hour before the appointed time of crossing the state border), an assault group of border guards and Red Army soldiers captured the bridge across the border river Zbruch near Volochisk, along which our troops immediately began to cross without hindrance. The 4th cavalry corps of the front, having passed Drohobych, on September 26 reached

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The township of Schatsk is located in the upper reaches of the Pripyat, 60 km northwest of Kovel.

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Sutkowice, Viskovice, Lanovice, Verezhnitsa districts. Here, at 21:00, the corps received an order to prepare for battles with the Polish cavalry group under the command of General W. Anders, which, according to intelligence, was in the forests north of Reiterowice.

By decision of the corps commander, the 32nd cd continued to move to Dobromil, Khyruv, while the 34th cd, the 26th tank brigade and the 18th tank regiment of the 32nd cavalry division remained in place, waiting for the Poles to approach. At 6.30 on September 27, the 26th and 27th Lancers of the Anders group attacked the 148th Cavalry Regiment in Sutkovitsa, however, met with artillery fire and a counterattack, they retreated to the edge of the forest. During the three-hour battle, the enemy lost 300 people killed, 200 prisoners, 4 guns and 7 machine guns. The next day the group was dispersed, but General Anders disappeared with several officers. Meanwhile, in the middle of the day on September 28, the 32nd cd entered Khyruv and Konyuv, where, after a short battle, they captured the remnants of the 25th uhlan regiment. On the evening of September 28, the troops of the 4th Cavalry Corps began to guard the border from Przemyśl to Mshanets. General Anders was taken prisoner on 30 September.

Having received a message that the Red Army had crossed the Polish border, the German command at 0700 on September 17 ordered the troops to stop on the Skole-Lvov-Vladimir-Volynsky-Brest-Bialystok line. From September 20 - even before the operations in Poland were completed - it began to transfer troops to the west. During the three or four days of the operation, our troops reached the line of Vilna, Grodno, Bialystok, Kobrin, Lvov. At 10.30 on September 21, the headquarters of the Byelorussian and Ukrainian fronts received an order from the People's Commissar of Defense to stop the troops on the line reached by advanced units by 20.00 on September 20. The task was set to bring up lagging units and rear areas, to establish stable communications, to be in a state of full combat readiness, to increase vigilance by taking measures to protect the rear areas and headquarters.

The Soviet command demanded from the troops in every possible way

avoid conflicts when meeting with the Germans. However, units of the 19th MK G. Guderian, having crossed the Bug, captured a significant area around Brest and tried to move further east. The fact is that the 29th tank bri

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the reptile, acting in the vanguard of the troops of the 4th Army, was forced to stop before reaching Brest, as it ran out of fuel. The rear fell behind, and no one knew where the head fuel depots were. A convoy of 40 tank trucks was sent to search for him. In the Baranovichi area, the column ran into S.M. Budyonny, who apparently acted as a representative of the People's Commissariat of Defense. The marshal was indignant that the tanks were without fuel, gave someone a thrashing, and it was immediately found. On the way back, the 29th Tor P.A. Ershov detained a car with a German officer that he met. He obviously followed the movement of Soviet troops and kept some kind of records. Despite the protests of the "allies", Yershov seized their car and detained the officer and driver in the rank of sergeant major. Later, brigade commander S.M. Krivoshein had to apologize to the detained Germans. And Ershov, instead of gratitude for the delivered fuel, was punished [235].

The difficult situation with the provision of troops with fuel, primarily tank and mechanized formations and units, was later testified by Marshal Budyonny. At a meeting of the leadership of the Red Army in December 1940, S.M. Budyonny remembered:

"I had to transport fuel for the 5th micro-military regiment in Belarus <...> by air. It's good that there was no one to fight with. On the roads from Novogrudok to Volkovysk, 75 percent of the tanks stopped due to [lack of] fuel. The commander [of the front] said that he could only send fuel by plane, but who would organize it? The organization of the rear requires knowledgeable people! [236].

In agreement with the German command, Soviet troops were systematically moving west. By September 26-27, units of the 3rd and 11th A had established themselves on the border with Lithuania and East Prussia as far as Shchuchin. To the south, on the Go Nyondz-Knyshin front, the 20th Motorized Rifle Brigade and the 6th Corps deployed. The 6th and 11th rifle divisions to Vysoka Mazowiecka, and the 13th and 4th rifle divisions stopped at the front south of Bialystok to the river. Narew. The 8th rifle division from the 4th army crossed the river. The Western Bug and took the Germans Byala-Podlyaska, and the 6th cd - Bialystok. 11th cd went to the area

By air, fuel had to be delivered to the 15th shopping mall.

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The Soviet representative convinces the Germans of violating the agreed line of contact between German and Soviet troops in the Brest-Litovsk region (fragment from a German film)

Krynki-Bialostotsky. By September 28-29, Soviet troops advanced to the line Shchuchin - Staviski - Lomzha - Zambruv - Tsekhanovets - Kosuv-Lacki - Sokoluv-Podlaski - Losice - Mendzizhets-Podlaski (see diagram 4).

The "friendly" meeting in Brest ended with the fact that the Soviet representatives, including an employee of the People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs, demanded that the German command withdraw all German units beyond the demarcation line. Ultimately, the German troops were forced to leave Brest, leaving military and civilian property prepared for shipment to Germany in place. During the withdrawal of units of the 19th MK from the city, the now widely known parade of Soviet and German troops took place, marching in front of the podium, on which General G. Guderian and the commander of the Soviet tank brigade commander S.M. Krivoshein. Later, Krivoshein wrote that he was forced to accept the parade with Guderian, if only to quickly push the Germans over the Bug. The very fact of the joint parade, for obvious reasons, publicity

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did not receive it in the Soviet press at that time. It was only in the 1990s that Soviet people were able to read the story about the parade in Literaturnaya Gazeta and even get acquainted with the corresponding SHIM SNIMKOMM.

A more serious conflict took place in the Lvov region, where units of the 24th Tank Brigade at 0800 on September 19, faced with the Germans on the eastern outskirts of the city and mistaking them for Poles, opened fire on them. In the course of a short battle, the Germans lost 3 people killed and 9 wounded, as well as 3 anti-tank guns. "The 24th brigade lost 3 people killed and 4 wounded, as well as one tank and two armored tires [237]. The remnants of Polish formations that made their way

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G Guderian and S.M. Krivoshein in Brest in September 1939 near the building of the administration of the Polesky Voivodeship, where Guderian's headquarters were located. (photo from the book "The Crucibles")

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Soviet and German troops in the same formation at the parade in Brest on September 22, 1939

from the border with East Prussia, tried to break into the territory of Hungary. After a fierce battle, about 4 thousand Polish soldiers and officers preferred to surrender to the Germans, rather than the Russians, who had already captured the city.

All this time, the leadership of Germany and the USSR continued intensive negotiations regarding the final demarcation line. The Germans wanted to keep the cities of Lvov, Augustow with the surrounding forests and the oil-bearing region in the upper reaches of the river. San. Ultimately, on September 28, a new demarcation line was agreed upon, running along four rivers: Pissa, Narew, Vistula, San. Our troops, who found themselves to the west of this line, on October 5 began to withdraw to the line, which later, after some minor changes, was fixed as the state border between Germany and the USSR.

The Polish-German war lasted a little over a month. September 28 capitulated the garrison and the workers' detachments of Warsaw, badly destroyed by the bombing

' It basically coincided with the so-called "Curzon Line" proposed back in 1919 by England, France, the USA and some other countries as an ethnographically based border between Soviet Russia and Poland.

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and artillery fire. On September 29, the Modlin fortress capitulated; on October 2, the garrison of the military port of Hel surrendered. The last to lay down their arms was a group of troops under the command of General Kleeberg, consisting of about two divisions. This happened on October 6 near Kock, east of Deblin.

In fierce battles with the Wehrmacht, the Poles lost about 620 thousand people, including: killed and missing - 66,300, wounded - 133,700, prisoners -

420 thousand. In addition, they went abroad, mainly to Romania, Lithuania and Hungary - 84,600 people. The Germans destroyed and captured 2218 guns and mortars, 391 aircraft. Accordingly, the losses of the German ground forces in people amounted to: 46,985 people, including: killed - 10,572, missing - 3,409, wounded - 30,322. The losses of the Germans in weapons and military equipment amounted to: guns and mortars - 248, tanks - 229, aircraft - 564, vehicles - 4588 [238]. According to other sources, the Germans in Poland lost 819 tanks [239], of which 236 were irretrievably lost, including: 89 R7.1, 83 R7.P, 7 R?.35(%), 7 R7.38(+) , 26 R.Sh, 19 R?LU and 5 commander's [240].

The losses of Poland in people on the territory where the Soviet troops operated amounted to about 481,200 people, including: killed - 3,500, missing and wounded about 20 thousand, captured - 457,700; in armament: guns and mortars - 900, aircraft - 300 [241].

Due to the lack of organized resistance from the Poles, the losses of the Soviet troops were not significant. For example, the 8th SD, operating from September 17 to 26 in the first echelon of the 4th Army, lost 8 people killed and 14 wounded. The losses in battle of tank brigades attached to the 4th Army in the period from September 17 to October 4 amounted to: in the 29th brigade - 3 tanks (at the same time on the march 62 failed for technical reasons), in the 32nd , respectively - 4 and 61. The combat losses of the tank brigades of both fronts amounted to 42 tanks (mainly wrecked), while 429 were out of order due to technical reasons and as a result of accidents.

In total, our troops on a campaign in Western Belarus and Western Ukraine lost 3379 people, including: killed and died at the stages of sanitary evacuation - 852, disappeared without

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lead and were taken prisoner - 144, sanitary losses amounted to - 2383 [242]. According to other, updated data, the Red Army lost a little more - 3858 people, including 1173 who died and died from diseases and wounds, 302 - went missing, 2002 - were wounded, and the remaining 381 fell ill [243].

The nature and intensity of hostilities on the two fronts can be judged from the following figures. The troops of the Belorussian Front lost 1,145 people (0.56% of the total), including: killed and died - 490, missing - 13, wounded (shell-shocked) - 642. stages of sanitary evacuation - 683 people, missing - 289, sanitary losses - 1741, total - 2713 (1.01% of the total number) [244]. The irretrievable losses of the Red Army in armament were: guns and mortars - 6, tanks - 17, aircraft - 6, vehicles - 36 [245].

Molotov in a report at a meeting of the Supreme Soviet

On October 31, 1939, the USSR, listing the rich trophies taken by the Red Army during the September campaign in Poland (more than 900 guns, over 10,000 machine guns, 300 aircraft, 300 thousand rifles, etc.), underestimated the losses of our troops IN PEOPLE:

"The total number of victims suffered by the Red Army on the territory of Western Belarus and Western Ukraine is: killed - 737, wounded - 1862, that is, in general - 2599 people <...>. The territory of Western Ukraine that has passed to us, together with the territory of Western Belarus, is 196 thousand square kilometers, and its population is about 13 million people, of which more than 7 million are Ukrainians, more than 3 million are Belarusians, and more than poles | million, Jews - over | million <...>" [246]

The Red Army took prisoner more than 452.5 thousand Polish military personnel, including the troops of the Belorussian Front (from 17 to 30 September) - 60,202 (officers - 2066), the Ukrainian Front (from 17.9 to 2.10) - 392,334 ( officers - 16,723) [247]. The number of prisoners, as it turned out later, included not only military personnel, but also policemen, gendarmes and even foresters - everyone who wore some kind of uniform. The commanders asked what to do with the prisoners, where to send them. Naturally, there was not enough transport to send them to the rear.

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So, on st. Baranovichi, filled with trains with materiel for the troops, in October several trains with captured Polish soldiers and officers accumulated. M. Meltyukhov gives examples of executions of prisoners. Apparently, these were isolated cases of arbitrariness, for which hardly anyone was punished. It should be noted that from the moment contact was established between our troops and the Germans, there was an unorganized exchange of Polish prisoners of war: the Germans handed them over to our troops, but often refused to accept them from our side. It is not clear on what basis the prisoners were selected - according to their place of residence? Subsequently, our command decided to accept as many prisoners from the Germans as the latter were ready to accept from us. Although there were cases when the Poles preferred to surrender to the Germans rather than to the Soviet troops.

After the conclusion of the "Treaty of Friendship and Border" with Germany on September 28, 1939, all combat-ready units of the Wehrmacht were transferred to the West. In the occupied territory, there remained mainly second-rate formations, staffed with contingents of old ages, and guard units.

Conclusions from the Polish campaign. Aggression against Poland was the most important part of Hitler's plan to build a thousand-year Reich. More than anything, he feared that at the last moment some intermediary would be able to persuade or force Poland to accept the German

demands peacefully, as happened with Czechoslovakia in Munich. Hitler needed a victorious war. Firstly, he wanted to test the muscles of the Wehrmacht he had nurtured, to test the new organization of its units and formations, to test in the present case the latest military equipment, and most importantly, the strategy and tactics of blitzkrieg. Poland for Hitler's strategists became a kind of testing ground for testing the theory of "blitzkrieg" and the issues of using it in the types of armed forces and combat arms in a strategic operation. Only if the blitzkrieg was successful did Germany, with its lack of material resources necessary for waging a long war of attrition, have any hope of gaining dominance in Europe by force.

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Another goal of Hitler was to restore to the German people and his army the self-confidence that had been shaken after the defeat of Germany in the First World War, and at the same time to sow fear in the ranks of his future opponents. The convincing victory was supposed to contribute to an unprecedented growth of his personal prestige. All these tasks were completed in full, but the course of the war turned out to be not as smooth as the Nazi leadership would have liked and as Goebbels' propaganda tried to present it to the whole world.

The military operations in Poland revealed fundamental changes in the content and nature of operations in the initial period of the war. The mobilization and deployment of the armed forces of the opposing sides were carried out as early as the pre-war period with the adoption of a whole range of measures to ensure camouflage and misinformation of the enemy. However, it was Germany that succeeded in this respect, preempting Poland in the deployment of troops. This allowed the Wehrmacht to deliver sudden strong blows by pre-created groups with the massive use of tank and motorized formations. The German command used maximum forces and means in the first echelon, which made it possible to create multiple superiority in forces and means over the enemy in the chosen directions of the main attacks of army groups. Operational reserves for building up efforts were created by redeploying newly mobilized formations from [Germany]. This became possible due to the fact that Poland's allies in the West did not fully fulfill their promises.

Blitzkrieg is primarily a tank war. For the first time in combat conditions, the OKH used such large highly mobile formations as tank divisions and motorized corps to break through the enemy defenses and develop success. The combat operations revealed the enormous operational and strategic capabilities of the tank forces, which closely interact with the air force. Air strikes, coordinated in time and place with the offensive of the ground forces, made it possible to break the enemy defenses to the full depth in a short time, ensure the introduction of mobile troops into the breakthrough and quickly develop success. In re-

as a result, the depth and pace of the offensive increased

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for a decisive operation, conditions appeared for quick maneuver in the operational depth in terms of coverage (bypassing) and encirclement of large enemy groupings.

Nevertheless, the war with Poland was by no means an easy walk. The fierce resistance of the Poles more than once led to the disruption of German war plans. As its most striking examples, one can note the stubborn defense of Warsaw and Westerplatte, as well as a counterattack on the Bzura River. The Germans had to throw into battle most of their armed forces and use up considerable reserves of material resources. The Poles were defeated because the German quantitative and qualitative superiority in forces was too great, and the tactics used by the Germans for the first time of the massive use of tanks with continuous air support came as a complete surprise to the Polish command.

It was the tank and motorized formations, which accounted for less than one sixth of all German divisions involved in Poland, in close cooperation with the Luftwaffe, that ensured such a quick victory for the Wehrmacht. The speed was especially critical because of the situation in which Germany found itself after France and England declared war on Germany on September 3rd. It was important to put an end to the resistance of the Poles as quickly as possible and to begin the transfer of troops to the west even before the moment when the French army had completed its mobilization and deployment and was ready to go on the offensive. Hitler started a big gambling game and did not lose. After the success of the Polish adventure, he became so convinced of his own genius as a politician and commander that he began to increasingly neglect the advice of the General Staff and the highest military leaders.

The greatest successes in the Polish campaign were achieved by the 16th and 19th motorized corps, in which the tank divisions were not scattered in parts in different directions, but were used as powerful rams. Particularly distinguished was the 19th MK under the command of General Heinz Guderian, which initially consisted of the 3rd Panzer, 2nd and 20th Motorized Divisions. After the successful destruction of the enemy forces in the "Polish corridor", the 2nd MD was replaced by the 10th TD. With these forces, Guderian broke through to Brest and

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mastered it already on September 14th. In 10 days of active operations, the 19th MK fought 320 km, losing only 2236 people, including 650 killed, 1345 wounded, and 241 missing, which was less than 4% of all Guderian's forces [248]. The Germans immediately appreciated such impressive successes of their



mobile connections. And in the campaign in the west in May-June 1940, four motorized corps were already involved, which played a decisive role in the victory of the Wehrmacht in France and became the prototypes of future tank corps.

But serious shortcomings were also revealed in the organization of the German tank forces. Two different types of their formations fought in Poland: tank and light divisions. The light divisions were originally conceived to replace the cavalry, which was losing its importance under the pressure of technological progress. But the shortcomings of the light divisions were obvious from the very moment of their appearance. Even before the Polish campaign, it was decided to reorganize them into ordinary tank divisions, at the same time increasing the number of tanks in them. Already on September 12, the 1st light division was renamed the 6th tank division, in October 1939 the 2nd and 3rd light divisions became tank, and the last, 4th light; reorganized into a tank unit in January 1940 [249].

The fighting of the tank forces in Poland showed that the tank divisions of the original organization were overburdened with tanks and suffered from a lack of infantry needed to support them in battle. Taking into account the combat experience gained, their staffs were improved, the number of tanks was reduced. So, if in the first five German tank divisions that fought in Poland, there were an average of 340 tanks, then by the spring of 1940 in the ten tank divisions that took part in the western campaign, their number on average decreased by a quarter - to 258 pieces. In the future, the process of searching for the most advantageous ratio between tank and infantry subunits in the composition of tank divisions continued on the basis of the experience of new battles. The German motorized divisions in Poland also proved to be too bulky and difficult to manage for mobile warfare. Therefore, one of the motorized regiments was withdrawn from their staff. These regiments were transferred to the newly formed formations.

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In a combat situation, significant shortcomings of Wehrmacht tanks were revealed. All of them originally had only bulletproof armor, and their main defense on the battlefield was supposed to be speed and maneuver. However, this was clearly not enough: as a result of the fighting, over 30% of German tanks failed. Polish anti-tank rifles proved to be a much more dangerous adversary for tanks than had been imagined before the war. Close acquaintance with them on the battlefield convinced the Germans to establish the production of their own anti-tank rifles in Germany and to strengthen the armor protection of their tanks. The P7.[ tanks did not have weight reserves for additional armor, so they began to be gradually converted into ammunition transporters and self-propelled guns. Additional 20-mm armor plates began to be installed on the forehead of R7.P tanks and assault guns. And the thickness of the armor of the R7 medium tanks in production. Shi R7 / U the Germans brought to

30 mm even earlier.

Unexpectedly high losses in the war and the failure of military vehicles for technical reasons laid a heavy burden on the German tank maintenance and repair system. There was an acute shortage of spare parts for repairs. After the end of the war, German tank factories were so overburdened with the repair of battle-damaged tanks and the production of the necessary spare parts that in November 1939 Germany experienced a sharp drop in the production of new tanks, the growth of which resumed only the following year. Thus, in October 1939 the Germans produced 108 new tanks, in November - 67, in December - 63, in January 1940 - 76, and in February - 92 [250]. But they managed to restore 583 tanks out of 819 that failed as a result of combat damage.

and breakdowns.

The large-scale war allowed the Wehrmacht to identify and eliminate in the future many minor shortcomings that were almost impossible to predict in advance. So, unexpectedly, it turned out that the stocks of horseshoes, made to the size usual for army horses, are not suitable for the broken hooves of the village bityugs mobilized into the army. The equipment of the sappers from the assault units turned out to be too heavy and made it difficult for them to take joint actions.

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with infantry on the offensive. The Germans were strongly impressed by the night attacks of the Poles, as well as attacks by partisans on their rear. They began to pay more attention to the development of countermeasures to these actions.

Nevertheless, the main result of the Polish campaign was undoubtedly the most valuable combat experience acquired by the Wehrmacht in a short time and at a relatively low cost. At the beginning of hostilities, the Germans had enough slips when Luftwaffe planes bombed their own advanced units, artillery lagged behind infantry and tanks and therefore did not provide them with proper support, troops neglected the requirements of camouflage, etc. and so on. But after each battle, German soldiers and commanders acquired skills and abilities that helped them fight more successfully and more effectively in the future. At the same time, their confidence in their own strength and in their command also grew. As a result of the fighting, the troops gained experience in conducting highly maneuverable operations, and the German command gained extensive experience in command and control in the implementation of blitzkrieg. So the Wehrmacht began its formation as the most effective war machine of its time, equipped not only with modern weapons, but also with the most advanced theory of mobile warfare, successfully tested in practice.

The political leadership of Poland overestimated the effectiveness of the guarantees given by Britain and France. In turn, the Polish command hoped that Germany would be forced to keep significant forces in the west against France. It also counted on effective assistance

British air and naval forces. Due to this, the Poles wanted to hold out before the ground forces of the Allies entered into action. But hopes for two effective fronts against Hitler were not destined to come true. The hopes that Germany would not be able to oppose Poland at once with all its forces did not come true, since it would take some time to mobilize and concentrate them.

The Polish campaign showed that positional defense, as it was organized during the First World War, was largely outdated. In an effort to cover everything and give nothing away, the Polish main headquarters did not use the possibility of creating a strategic defense in depth at more advantageous lines than along the border. To endure the

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concentrated strikes by tank formations supported by active actions of large aviation forces, the defense must be in depth, saturated with a sufficient number of anti-tank weapons, have significant mobile reserves, and the defending troops must be reliably covered from air strikes.

In addition, the Poles did not reveal the real goals and intentions of the Germans, reducing them to the issue around the long overdue conflict of the Danzig corridor. They did not reveal the direction of the attacks of the main enemy groupings. Therefore, the Silesian direction, where the Germans struck the main blow, turned out to be poorly covered. The short-lived fighting in Polsh had a great influence on the development of military art. It became clear that the outbreak of the world war would differ in many respects from the war of 1914-1918. In particular, the increased role of aviation and the importance of gaining air supremacy from the first hours of hostilities were clearly manifested. By the way, the first strike of the Luftwaffe on airfields did not lead to the destruction of Polish aviation, since on August 3] it was relocated to field airfields. For this reason alone, the preparations and the very course of hostilities in Poland deserved the closest attention and study.

The Soviet command, having thrown more than 4,700 tanks against the Polish army, also had the opportunity to test some views on their massive use in real conditions. However, the lack of organized resistance on the part of the Poles and the small spatial scope of hostilities did not allow the theory of a deep offensive operation to be tested in practice. The average rate of advance of the advanced tank brigades in the zone of the Belorussian Front was 40-60 km per day, the Ukrainian Front - up to 45 km. On September 25, the depth of advance of the Soviet troops following the retreating Germans in various directions was from 250 to 350 km.

But the main forces of the troops of both fronts acted in marching columns. At the same time, reconnaissance of routes. behaved badly. For example, in the 6th tank brigade they managed to plant

in the swamp up to 60 tanks. As a result, the brigade was 12 hours late in leaving for the designated area. The rate of advance of tank units along the roads averaged 8-10 km/h.

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This led to increased fuel and oil consumption. Even before the start of hostilities, during the advancement of troops to the areas of operational designation, and then to the initial areas of deployment, a significant number of out-of-service machines and tractors had to be left behind. Therefore, many parts could not take out the materiel put to them. But even those machines and tractors that set out on a campaign often broke down already during the first crossing and blocked the roads [251]. The situation was especially bad with tank trucks. Instead, the troops used ordinary trucks with fuel barrels, which were also in short supply. For example, the 15th TC, which was only 18% equipped with tankers, was able to lift only 50% of fuel and lubricants (POL) and 25% of ammunition. Meanwhile, vehicles with fuel and lubricants quickly fell behind. The head fuel depots also lagged behind.

In artillery regiments on a mechanized tractor, tractors of various types, taken from the national economy, were in poor condition. Already on the first transitions, many of them failed. Insufficient amount of repair facilities and lack of spare parts did not allow them to be quickly repaired in the field. As a result, the artillery lagged behind the infantry. Traffic on the roads was carried out in 3-4 rows. And since there was no regulation service, attempts by individual machines to catch up with their units led to the disorganization of the movement. Radio communication worked poorly, besides, the radio facilities had a short range. As a result of poorly organized interaction, there were cases of shooting at friendly troops. Looking ahead, we note that all this happened again in 1941.

Many shortcomings were also noted in matters of material support for personnel. Control stations and supply stations turned out to be packed with echelons (the difference in the gauge of the railway tracks affected), and the delivery of the necessary cargo to the troops was disrupted. Due to the backlog of field bakeries in some formations, difficulties arose in providing personnel with bread. I had to apply to local private enterprises, to use the captured trophies [252].

Many shortcomings and overlays were revealed, which are quite explainable by the poor combat training of troops and command

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composition. And this is quite understandable. With the "double" and especially "triple" deployment of formations and units, there was a great shift in command personnel. Many of

them, advanced one or even two steps up, did not always correspond to their positions. "Basic" (they were sometimes called formations of the first stage) and newly created formations had to be understaffed on an urgent basis, to organize on the go the training of command personnel for the performance of combat missions, to carry out at least a minimal cohesion of units and subunits. The shortcomings primarily concerned the issues of command and control, organization of interaction and communications, combat and logistics support.

Nevertheless, our troops received, albeit limited, but experience in combat operations. This experience, including the negative one, had to be generalized and correct conclusions drawn for the future. To outline measures so that the identified shortcomings are not repeated in a collision with a stronger enemy. First of all, it was necessary to think over and fine-tune the entire chain of measures to prepare for combat operations, starting with mobilization (including covert), to the timely bringing of troops to full combat readiness, including in the event of a surprise attack by the enemy.

Unfortunately, not all conclusions from the Polish campaign turned out to be justified. Thus, in connection with the cumbersome and difficult control of large tank formations, a hasty decision was made to disband the four tank corps in the Red Army, as well as rifle and machine gun corps. brigades. Instead, they decided to build up the creation of separate tank brigades, which "acted better and more mobile", but abolished the rifle and machine gun battalions in them and reduced them

REAR.

"STRANGE WAR" IN  
THE WEST AND ITS DENOUCION

The Polish government very much hoped to receive timely and serious assistance from its allies - England and France. In accordance with the Franco-Polish military convention concluded on May 19, 1939, and the promises

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Commander-in-Chief of the French Army, General M. Gamelet, the French were to go on a major offensive with the forces of 35-38 divisions no later than 16 days after the start of German aggression against Poland [253].

But just a month later, representatives of the headquarters of the British and French armies came to an agreement to recommend to the governments of their countries to act in accordance with the following principle:

The fate of Poland will depend on the final outcome of the war, and this, in turn, on our ability to inflict the final

new defeat of Germany, and not on our ability to relieve pressure on Poland at the very beginning of the war. [254].

The Allies were further strengthened in this opinion by the visit to Poland on July 17-19 of the high-ranking English General W. Ironside, who, with the outbreak of the war, headed the imperial general staff. He was convinced with his own eyes that the Polish army was unable to provide long-term resistance to the Wehrmacht, so the allied command planned its actions taking this circumstance into account.

The main burden of the land war with Germany was to be taken on by France, therefore, the readiness of the Allies to begin active hostilities on the Western Front depended on its ability to quickly mobilize and deploy its army. The covert mobilization of the French army began well in advance. Already in the summer of 1939, about 75% of the trained reservists were called up, which made it possible by August 26 to deploy 72 divisions. On the day of the German attack on Poland, | September, general mobilization was officially announced in France, and by September 9, the French already had 99 divisions in the territory of the metropolis, armed with 11 thousand guns and 3286 tanks [255]. French aviation at that time numbered 550 fighters, of which only 370 were modern, and 410 bombers [256].

England assumed the main responsibility for the implementation of the naval blockade of Germany and was going to support the French both on land and in the air. September 1st from England

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10 bomber squadrons arrived, and on September 7, two fighter squadrons. On September 10, the main air force of the British Expeditionary Force, consisting of eight bomber and six fighter squadrons, began to relocate to French airfields [257]. In total, the British sent a total of about 400 aircraft to France. In the entire British land aviation then there were only 1143 modern combat aircraft. The British Expeditionary Force, consisting of four divisions, completed its deployment in France only on 11 October.

By September 10, Germany had concentrated 43\*/ infantry divisions in the west, of which only half were the well trained and trained divisions of the 1st and 2nd waves of formation. The rest belonged to the less efficient 3rd and 4th waves [258]. They were armed with 8640 guns and mortars, but at the same time they did not have a single tank: all German mobile units were involved in Poland. The forces of the Luftwaffe were consolidated into two air fleets - the 2nd and 3rd. They numbered 559 fighters, 548 bombers, of which 40 were diving,

and 258 scouts, of which 105 are distant [259].

Thus, if in the air the forces of the opponents were approximately equal, then on the ground the allies had a significant superiority, especially in tanks. But it was not at all easy to implement it: the area of direct combat contact of troops with a width of about 150 km was limited to the rivers Rhine and Moselle. His right flank rested on the wide and full-flowing Rhine, behind which stretched the difficult-to-pass Black Forest mountain range with peaks up to one and a half kilometers high, overgrown with dense forest. Switzerland began further south. On the left, the front was limited to Luxembourg and Belgium, beyond which Holland extended. All these countries were determined to remain neutral in the escalating war. They did not at all smile at the gloomy prospect of making their territory the scene of fierce battles of huge armies, as had happened more than once in the past. Their leaders categorically refused to take any action that would give Germany the slightest pretext to unleash against them

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war. They did not want to hear about the passage of allied troops through their territories. The lesson of the First World War, when the German army invaded these countries and occupied them without any reason, did not serve them well. By their actions, they significantly hampered the actions of the allies, who were forced to put up with them, objectively playing into the hands of [Germany with their short-sighted and selfish policy of neutrality.

But the command of the Wehrmacht in early September 1939 received an excellent opportunity to cover the safe borders with Luxembourg, Belgium and Holland with a handful of second-rate divisions, stretched out in a string on a wide front. The Germans were very risky, because a strong blow in this area would certainly have crushed their liquid defense and brought the Allies not only to the rear of their main western grouping, defending on the Franco-German border, but also to the Ruhr industrial region - the heart of the industry of the Third Reich and his main forge of weapons. What this meant is not difficult to guess, especially considering that all the reserves of the OKH in the West at that time consisted of only two weak divisions of the 4th wave of formation, which had not had time to undergo proper training. Two more such reserve divisions were deployed in the former Czech territory, too far away to repel a possible threat to the Ruhr [260].

Hitler was well aware of all this:

"We have one Achilles heel - the Ruhr area. The course of the war depends on the possession of the Ruhr. If France and England attack the Ruhr area through Belgium and Holland, we will be in great danger. German resistance will come to an end" [261].

At the same time, the Germans had no doubt that the Allies would respect the neutrality of the Benelux countries. This allowed them to create a powerful defense against the French by September 10 with an average density of 10-12 km per division of the first echelon, which relied on the stationary "Siegfried Line" or, as it was also called, the "Western Wall". These fortifications consisted of three main lines: the front line, from two to 20 km deep, the main one, echeloned for 3-8 km, and the rear, located several kilometers behind the main one. Behind

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they housed the air defense zone. Approximately 22,000 long-term fixed structures formed the basis of the defense, although the equipment of some of them had not yet been finally completed by the beginning of the war. The approaches to it were covered by 280 km of concrete gouges in 4-6 rows, nicknamed "dragon's teeth", anti-tank ditches and other obstacles, vast minefields and thick wire fences. The artillery consisted of numerous guns of the most diverse calibers: from 37 mm anti-tank to 305 mm naval guns with a range of 48 km [262]. The lion's share of all this weapons was located in the interfluvium of the Rhine and Moselle.

The impregnability of the "Siegfried Line" was largely exaggerated by the skillful propaganda of the office of Dr. Goebbels. But in fact, breaking through such a defense, saturated with reinforced concrete defensive structures and fire weapons, required careful preparation and was inevitably associated with huge sacrifices. The super-powerful siege and railway guns with a caliber of up to 520 mm, necessary for the destruction of long-term German fortifications, were mostly stored in French warehouses. They were quite suitable for use, although they managed to get out of date. They only had to be reactivated, put in order and pulled up to the front line. But the allies did not want to repeat the bloody "Verdun meat grinder" of the times of the First World War. Under these conditions, Gamelin, who was appointed commander-in-chief of the allied forces in France on September 3, 1939, considered it possible to launch a decisive offensive not earlier than in 1941, and even then only after receiving a sufficient amount of military equipment from the United States. By that time, the British were about to form, equip and train a large land army. Each of the allies could present many convincing excuses for their passivity. But they had another important reason, which they preferred not to mention: no one in the West wanted to die to help Poland, which was bleeding in an unequal struggle against the Nazis. She was assigned the role of a pawn, intended to be sacrificed in the name of the final victory over Germany. By your resistance

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the Polish army was supposed to divert the main forces of the Wehrmacht and give the allies the opportunity to mobilize and deploy their troops without interference. England and France at that time were quite satisfied with the strategy of blockade of Germany, therefore, intensive hostilities unfolded only at sea.

In the meantime, the French nevertheless made a timid attempt at an offensive on the land front. On the night of September 7, advanced French units crossed the German border in the Saarbrücken area. Two days later, nine French divisions began to cautiously move forward. They met practically no resistance from the German combat guard, which was ordered to retreat to the "Siegfried Line" without a fight. The main obstacle for the advancing troops was the dense minefields and numerous explosive traps left by the Germans on their way. The most unpleasant surprise was the hitherto secret anti-personnel "frog-mines" ergentsche 35, which had a great lethality. In early September, the Germans managed to install 129 thousand of these mines there, and along with them another 82 thousand anti-tank mines [263]. Having come across these mines at night, the French did not immediately realize what they were dealing with. They had never before encountered such a large-scale and dense mining. At first they thought they were under fire from artillery firing shrapnel, and they could not understand how the Germans managed to shoot in total darkness with such amazing accuracy, when every projectile invariably found its target.

As a result of the operation, the French captured a strip of German territory about 25 km long and 7-8 km deep, capturing about 20 German villages, the inhabitants of which managed to evacuate in time. On September 12, the French units received an order from Gamelin to stop and dig in one kilometer from the Siegfried Line. They never made any attempt to attack her.

The main result of the Saar Offensive was the propaganda noise in the French press and the greatly exaggerated statements of the allied command of their field.

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colleagues about its progress and successes. In fact, it was not possible to achieve the main thing there - the diversion of German troops from the Polish front, which, meanwhile, was bursting at all seams under the uninterrupted pressure of the Germans. The transfer of Wehrmacht units from Poland to the west began only on September 20, when the organized resistance of the Poles fell apart into separate pockets. Cautious Gamelin, who feared a flank attack by the Wehrmacht through Belgian territory, himself began to gradually withdraw troops to the starting point.

bottom positions. On October 4, they completely left the territory of Germany.

After that, the land war in the West finally turned into a "strange" one. Its intensity can be judged at least by the losses of the troops participating in it. The first corporal of the British Expeditionary Force was killed on 9 December. K. On December 25, two more Englishmen were killed. The total losses of the land army, aviation and navy of France by this time amounted to 1433 people [264]. The total losses of the Wehrmacht on the Western Front by October 18, according to the report of the OKW, amounted to 696 people, including 196 killed, 356 wounded and 144 missing. At the same time it was announced that the Germans had captured 689 French [265]. More intense hostilities unfolded at sea, where the Allies sought to strangle the Third Reich with a blockade. Here the parties suffered more significant losses. Thus, until the end of 1939, England only lost the aircraft carrier *Korages*, the battleship *Royal Oak*, the auxiliary cruiser *Rawalpindi*, three destroyers and one submarine among large warships. During the same period, 221 Allied merchant ships with a total displacement of more than 755,000 tons perished. The "pocket" battleship *Admiral Graf Spee* and nine submarines were sunk from the ships of the German Navy. At the same time, the Allies managed to achieve an almost fourfold drop in the supply of goods to Germany. The average monthly German import of industrial raw materials by the end of 1939 fell from the prewar 500 million marks to 130 million [266]. And this is despite the fact that the export of goods to the country from the east continued successfully.

After the final victory over Poland on October 6, 1939, Hitler made a big speech in the Reichstag in which

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peace proposals were made by England and France. The only condition he set was the preservation of all his conquests. This time, however, the leaders of the West have not been fooled. The very next day, French Prime Minister Daladier announced on national radio: "We have taken up arms against aggression. We will not put it down until we receive guarantees of genuine peace and security, a security that is not threatened every six months" [267]. On October 12, Chamberlain, on behalf of England, gave Hitler a similar answer. This meant that the allies were serious about fighting the war to a victorious end. Germany did not have enough resources to withstand a long blockade, so it is quite natural that it was she who decided to take action first.

We do not intend to present here, in a consistent and detailed manner, the course of hostilities in the West. I would like to draw the attention of readers, first of all, to the development of methods for unleashing war by Nazi Germany, to the measures taken by the Germans to achieve surprise, to the issues of the massive use of tanks, self-

years and other means. Along with the questions of planning and preparation of the operation, organization of communication and interaction, independent and proactive actions of tactical level commanders are of interest. After all, military actions in France were, in essence, a dress rehearsal for the war with the Soviet Union. With many commanders who distinguished themselves there, in just a year our troops will have to meet on the battlefields.

On October 19, Halder reported to the Führer the first version of the offensive plan, which received the code name "Gelb". The report did not make a particularly favorable impression on Hitler, who immediately declared: "After all, this is the old Schlieffe plan! with a strong right wing on the Atlantic coast; such operations do not go unpunished twice!" [268]. Indeed, there was nothing original in the plan in essence: geographical conditions did not provide much

Chief of the German General Staff Schlieffen developed his own plan in 1905, the main idea of which was to strike a strong blow on the right flank through the territories of the Benelux countries with the task of enveloping enemy forces from the north.

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choice of opportunities for a successful offensive. The Germans faced the same problems that faced the Allies. The short section of the border between the Rhine and the Moselle was saturated to the limit with troops and covered by the Maginot Line, which was considered impregnable. Any favorable prospects for waging a mobile war opened up only to the north. After all, the French fortifications ended at the Luxembourg border. Unlike the Allies, the Germans were ready to violate her tally of Holland, Belgium and Luxembourg without hesitation. The idea of the plan of the offensive, reported by Halder, as they say, was in the air. There was no hope that the operation based on it would be unexpected for the enemy. Actions of this kind could again lead to a positional war without the slightest chance of winning in a short time.

Hitler, inspired by the complete success of the Polish campaign, was in a great hurry to repeat it in the West and demanded that his military go on a decisive offensive as early as mid-November. But bad weather and lack of confidence in success led to the fact that the start of the operation was postponed 13 times. All this time, work on improving the Gelb plan did not stop, but no improvements could lead to guaranteed and quick success. Moreover, according to German intelligence, the most combat-ready French divisions and the well-equipped British Expeditionary Force were concentrated in the north-east of France, ready to respond as soon as possible to the Belgian call for help in the event of a German attack. It was obvious that

they are going to move forward in time to save the Belgian army from defeat, or at least fully armed to meet the German offensive on advantageous lines in the depths of Belgium.

The best minds of the strategists and tacticians of the German General Staff found themselves in a hopeless intellectual impasse, unable to offer anything better than a variation of the old Schlieffen plan. But among the German commanders, there was still a man who managed to put forward a fresh and fruitful idea for a future operation. It turned out to be the future Field Marshal Erich

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von Manstein, Chief of Staff of Army Group A with the rank of lieutenant general. He proposed to strike the main blow through the mountainous region of the Ardennes located in the very south of Belgium in the direction of Sedan and further west with access to the English Channel near the mouth of the Somme. This made it possible to cut off, press to the sea and swiftly crush the main Allied forces in northern France and Belgium with one blow. Moreover, the allied command considered this sector of the front to be secondary and covered it with relatively small forces. Subsequently, Churchill the famous master of the sonorous phrase - gave this operation an apt name: "hit with a sickle."

In the event of a successful overcoming of the Ardennes, large German forces suddenly found themselves in the rear of the French army. Manstein's plan was undoubtedly risky: covered with forested hills, cut by deep valleys, the terrain was extremely unfavorable for the actions of large masses of troops, especially tank ones. There was a real threat that the energetic actions of their troops and aviation, the Allies would be able to clog not many roads suitable for the movement of heavy equipment, and inflict heavy losses on the Germans. But Manstein managed to get significant support from the General of Tank Troops G. Guderian, who happened to participate in the offensive through the Ardennes back in 1914. In January-February 1918, Guderian studied at the monthly advanced training courses for officers of the General Staff, which were located in Sedan. Therefore, knowing well the conditions of the terrain and the real possibilities of the German tanks, he was ready to personally lead the charge through the Ardennes and only wanted all the German tank divisions to take part in it.

The success of the operation largely depended on the speed of its implementation: the Meuse River in the Sedan area had to be crossed no later than the fifth day after it began. Then the mobile formations were to rush without delay to the mouth of the Somme with maximum speed, without paying any attention to their exposed flanks, in order to prevent the Allied forces in the north from escaping the German encirclement. It is interesting that, according to Halder's calculations, it will be possible to cross the Meuse not earlier than on the ninth

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day of surgery, and most likely even on the tenth [269]. Dai continued the offensive, in his opinion, the tank divisions could only after the infantry had been pulled up to the bridgehead they had captured. Such cautious actions could lead, at best, to tactical success, but in no way to winning the war with lightning speed by cutting off and crushing the main forces of the Allies.

Meanwhile, Manstein proposed simultaneously with the first to deliver a second blow, also from Sedan, but in a southerly direction. It had a dual purpose: firstly, to actively cover the extended southern flank of the German shock group advancing to the west from French counterattacks, and secondly, to prevent the French from restoring the overturned front and organizing a new line of defense in the north of the country. In this case, troops defending on the Maginot Line fell into the encirclement. They would have to enter the battle with an inverted front and in unprepared positions. In the event of the success of these two blows, almost the entire French army found itself in huge "bags" and quickly ceased to exist. Thus, the entire campaign was won in a matter of days.

Manstein first proposed his concept to the leadership of the ground forces in a memorandum of October 31, exactly 10 days after he received the task of developing a plan of action for his army group based on the instructions of the OKH. During the last two months of 1939, he sent five more reports on this topic upwards, and the most fully developed plan was presented by him on January 12 of the following 1940 [270]. But all his insistent proposals invariably ran into the negative opinion of the commander-in-chief of the ground forces, von Brauchitsch, and the chief of the general staff, Halder. They did not want to recognize their own design as worthless and to appreciate someone else's. Moreover, so that the annoying Manstein with his annoying messages would not get under the feet of the high army authorities, on January 27, 1940, he was removed from the post of chief of staff of Army Group A and sent to serve in the troops as commander of the 38th Army Corps, who at that time existed only on paper. Manstein had to

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engage in its formation in Stettettin, far from the Western Front.

Meanwhile, the difficult situation with the Gelb plan was further complicated by an extremely unfortunate incident. On January 10, 1940, Hitler once again set the date for the start of the operation exactly one week later. On the same day, a small German liaison aircraft bound for Cologne

lost orientation, got lost and due to technical problems was forced to land on the territory of Belgium in the area of Mechelen. His only one. the passenger, Major Reinberger, who served as head of the logistics department at the headquarters of the 7th Airborne Division, carried a briefcase with detailed operational plans for the future German offensive. He tried to burn them, but in time the Belgians arrived in time and managed not only to save, but also to read the badly burned papers. They, of course, immediately shared their content with the French, English and Dutch. Learning about it. Hitler called off the offensive again. Now the Germans realized that their intentions had become known to the enemy, and they needed to be changed as soon as possible.

It was decided to finally abandon the original plan after four staff games, in which the stages of the future operation were worked out on the maps. Calculations showed that the troops clearly did not have sufficient forces to carry out the tasks assigned to them. Now even Halder finally realized the irreparable shortcomings of his plan and was ready to accept new ideas. Hitler learned of Manstein's original ideas and gave him the opportunity to elaborate on them on February 17, when he presented himself on the occasion of his appointment as corps commander. The report made a proper impression on Hitler. The next day he summoned von Brauchitsch and Halder to his office and ordered them to completely revise the plan for the campaign in the west on the basis of Manstein's proposal. This work was personally headed by Halder. Already on February 24, a new plan under the former name "Gelb"

' Running a little ahead, we note that until May 1940 the date of the operation was postponed another 15 times [271].

? (The author of the main plan himself did not have a chance to take part in the development of the details of the operation.

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approved by von Brauchitsch. At the same time, Halder did not dare to use all the ideas of Manstein, which were too radical for him, and refused to launch a second blow from Sed to the south at the same time as the first.

In accordance with the new plan, the regrouping of forces for a decisive offensive began. Having eliminated Czechoslovakia and Poland in advance and having a friendly Soviet Union behind him, Hitler could afford to leave in the east by the time the campaign began in the west a minimum of formations: four infantry and six security divisions on Polish territory. Of these, in the period from 25 to 30 May, two infantry divisions were transferred to Lower Saxony and Thuringia and included in the reserve of the high command [272]. The main German forces, including all 10 armored and six motorized divisions, and

also both motorized regiments were concentrated on the Western Front.

In the interval between campaigns in Poland and in the West, the Germans did not waste time. During this time, the number of the latest military equipment in the Wehrmacht has increased markedly. For example, the number of tanks armed with guns of 37 mm caliber and above has more than doubled. But even more important was the sharp increase in the level of training of troops due to their continuous intense combat training. A good example of this is the 6th TD. In the early spring of 1940, she worked several times on forcing issues on the Lahn River near Limburg. And at the end of April, all its caterpillar equipment was transported across the Rhine in the Mayen region for training purposes [273]. The Germans paid special attention to improving the training of command personnel. For this purpose, a special training division was formed, on the basis of which 300 officers were constantly trained at 3- or 4-week courses [274]. As a result, the combat readiness of the German troops increased significantly. The army of France, on the contrary, during the 8-month period of the "strange war" gradually lost its combat capability. The French soldiers were mainly engaged in building fortifications or helping local farmers. These activities did nothing to improve their fighting spirit and military skills.

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The French operational plan, which was based on the ideas of General Gamelin, received the code name "Dil", or simply "D". In accordance with it, the French were to meet and delay the German offensive even on the outskirts of their borders. On this complex issue, agreement was finally reached with the Government of Belgium. Only in the event of an invasion by the Wehrmacht in that country, and not before, could the 10 divisions of the French 1st Army, together with the five divisions of the British Expeditionary Force, be allowed to move forward and take up defensive positions on Belgian territory. The lines of this defense, starting from the north, from Antwerp, were chosen along the rivers Scheldt, Rupel, Diehl, further south to Namur and from it along the river Meuse to the French border. The most vulnerable section of this front was the gap between the rivers Dil and Meuse. According to Gamelin, it was here, on the wide plain of Flanders, ideally suited for the actions of mobile troops, that the Germans would try to break through to the west. There he intended to stop them.

The French were very interested in moving to Belgium in order to keep the Luftwaffe away from the industrial regions of northeastern France and, in turn, to bring the airfields of the Allied aviation closer to the heart of the German military industry - the Ruhr. This made it possible to shorten the front line from the left end of the "Maginot Line" near La Ferte to the North Sea by about 70 km (more than 20%) and significantly condense its defenses.

Well. Finally, due to timely support, the inevitable defeat of the Belgian army could be prevented in order to fight together with a common enemy in the future. The British leadership also fully supported the decision to organize a front in Belgium. It did not want to allow the entire Belgian and Dutch coast to fall into German hands, because this would significantly complicate the maintenance of a tight naval blockade of Germany. The Allies had no idea what the Germans really wanted to do, but they failed to keep their own plans secret.

Repeatedly verified intelligence data, as well as information from German radio intelligence, convincingly testify

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testified that the Allies were going to send troops to Northern and Central Belgium. The incident with the lost plane and the German plans falling into Belgian hands on January 10 also played to Hitler's advantage. Not knowing the exact date of the German attack, the Allies, just in case, decided to bring the forces intended for advancing to Belgium closer to the border, and this was immediately spotted by reconnaissance aircraft of the Luftwaffe. The Germans once again made sure that the French and the British were going to play just the same role that was assigned to them according to the "Gelb" plan.

However, the German command did not limit itself to this and organized a wide-ranging disinformation campaign with the aim, firstly, to create the enemy's illusion that the main blow would be delivered in the north, and secondly, to divert his attention from the Ardennes region. Numerous German diplomats and intelligence officers involved in this campaign acted in a variety of ways, but in unison. Constantly spreading rumors, deeply thought out "accidental leaks of information", skillfully planted "evidence" and so on. and so on. persistently brought to the attention of the allies information about the new German version of the "Schlieffen plan", which is about to be implemented.

All of these activities have been successful. Not without their influence, H[amelin] made the fateful decision to develop his original plan. On March 20, 1940, he proposed not to stop the left flank at Antwerp, but to push it even further to the city of Breda, located in the Netherlands, in order to join the Dutch army there. At the same time, Gamelin doubled the forces intended for this operation, and brought them up to 30 divisions, including selected French and British mechanized formations. To top it all off, the French 7th Army, which had originally been assigned the responsible role of a strategic reserve, stationed in the Reims area, just opposite the Ardennes, was now completely sent to Belgium. Gamelin had no doubt that the decisive battle with the Wehrmacht would take place in Flanders, and he gathered as many forces as possible for him. Without knowing it,



the Allies intended to go even deeper into the trap that the Germans carefully prepared for them.

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The balance of forces and means of the opponents on the eve of the decisive battle on the Western Front is presented in Table 3.3.

Table 3.3

CORRELATION IN FORCES AND  
EQUIPMENT ON THE WESTERN FRONT ON 05/10/1940

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movers  
and shturs

Sources: [275].

Notes:

° Of these, three incomplete infantry divisions, without artillery regiments; "including 18 assault guns;

n/a — no data.

The Allies had the greatest superiority in the number of field artillery. However, this is taking into account about 3800 heavy siege and railway guns of the First World War, which were intended primarily for positional combat, but were no good for maneuvering combat operations, where the one and a half superiority of the Germans in the number of counter-attacks was of greater importance.

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tank guns. In turn, the significant numerical superiority of the Germans in aviation was somewhat offset by the possibility of involving approximately 540 fighters and 310 bombers of the British Air Force in air operations. They were ready to relocate to the continent as soon as the need arose [276].

If we compare the materiel of tank troops, it can be noted that French tanks, as a rule, noticeably outnumbered their German opponents in terms of protection, but were inferior in mobility and equipment with radio communications. However, the main weakness of the French tank forces was not the design flaws of the combat vehicles, but their inefficient organization. The main panzer formations of the French army were three light mechanized divisions belonging to the cavalry, each of which counted 10,400 men and 220 tanks, and three reserve armored divisions subordinated to infantry, each numbering 6,510 men and 158 tanks [277]. Another 1,446 were in 33 separate tank battalions [278], intended to support infantry, and the rest were dispersed along the entire front as part of small units included in the staff of infantry and cavalry units. Thus, only 35% of French tanks were concentrated in independent mobile formations. The rest were dispersed along the entire front in small units intended to support the infantry. At the same time, the Germans had all the tanks available in the active army concentrated in 10 tank divisions. This was in keeping with Guderian's favorite principle: "Strike with your fist, not with outstretched fingers."

The Allies were far superior to the Germans in the level of motorization of troops. The French army, after the mobilization of civilian equipment, had about 300 thousand vehicles in service. The British Expeditionary Force was best motorized. The English infantry division of that time numbered 13,863 people, personnel, 1848 trucks and tractors, as well as 670 motorcycles. The British did not use horse-drawn transport at all [279]. At the beginning of February 1940, there were only about 120 thousand trucks in the German ground forces, and before the start of active hostilities, it was

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transport has not improved much. The available capacities of German industry made it possible to produce up to 4,000 trucks per month, of which only 2,500-2,600 were intended for the army. However, due to the acute shortage of steel and rubber, the army actually received no more than a thousand vehicles per month, which was less than 1% of the vehicle fleet available there and did not even cover natural attrition, not to mention combat losses [280].

German propaganda constantly purposefully created the image of the Wehrmacht as an army perfectly equipped with everything necessary, constantly rushing forward on tanks, cars and motorcycles. In fact, the vast majority of units and formations walked on foot along the roads in the dust raised by horse-drawn carts. The Germans tried to compensate for the lack of transport through its more efficient centralized use.

In general, judging formally, none of the opponents had a decisive superiority in forces and means, their total potentials were approximately equal. But this impression is misleading, because the main weakness of Germany's enemies was their disunity. The armies of Belgium and Holland not only did not submit to the allied command, but did not even have common plans of action with it, and yet they made up about a quarter of all the ground forces of the anti-German coalition. The lack of coordination at the decisive point of the imminent battle, the Ardennes region, was especially evident. Neither the French nor the Belgians considered it their area of responsibility. Both those and others planned to carry out there, if necessary, only deterrent actions and immediately withdraw, leaving the defense of this area to the neighbor. As a result, no one was going to seriously defend the Ardennes, and this was a wonderful gift for the Wehrmacht.

The Germans were preparing to bring three army groups into battle: "B" in the north, "A" in the main central direction, in the Ardennes region, and "C" in the south, opposite the Maginot Line (see diagram 5). The balance of enemy forces on these sectors of the Western Front as of May 10, 1940 is shown in Table 3.4.

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Table 3.4

RELATION OF FORCES (NUMBER OF DIVISIONS)  
ON THE MAIN DIRECTIONS OF THE WESTERN  
FRONT ON 05/10/1940

Source: [281].

The table clearly shows how the Germans, by weakening the secondary sectors of the front, created a decisive superiority in the main operational direction. It was there that seven of their 10 tank divisions were involved. In early March 1940, the first of its kind von Kleist tank group, named after its commander, was formed as part of GA "A" (commander von Rundstedt). It included exactly half of all available mobile formations and units of the Wehrmacht: five tank and three motorized divisions, as well as a motorized regiment. They were part of three motorized corps (mk): the 14th under the command of von Wittersheim (13th and 29th md), the 19th led by Guderian (1st, 2nd and 10th TD, mp "Grossdeutschland") and the 41st Reinhardt Corps (6th, 8th TD and 2nd MD). Another, the 15th motorized corps, led by Hoth (5th and 7th TD), covered the right flank of von Klei hundred from an attack from the north.

Interestingly, the original tank group background

Kleist was considered a temporary formation and, in the event of an unsuccessful strike through the Ardennes, was subject to disbandment. It was a huge and powerful association, which consisted of 134,370 personnel and 41,140 various vehicles, including 1222 tanks, 545 tracked and 39,373 wheeled vehicles. before her

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it was necessary to go with battles to the English Channel at least 600 km, with 170 km through the impassable Ardennes. Only four routes were suitable for the movement of columns. Taking into account the statutory intervals between cars on the march, the length of von Kleist's columns with simultaneous movement was almost 400 km each. The organization of the coordinated movement of all parts of such a colossus, even for a short distance, and supplying it with everything necessary was a very difficult task.

According to the regulations, the average speed of the movement of German motorized military columns was 15 km / h, therefore, theoretically, only one day of continuous march was required to reach the Meuse. The first 50 km ran through the territory of Luxembourg, where there were no enemy troops, but numerous roadblocks had to be overcome. The next 100 km of the route ran through the land of Belgium, where two fortified lines were equipped, which covered two Belgian divisions, reinforced by other units. Next, it was necessary to break through the French border fortifications and go the last 10-20 km to the Meuse. And here, finally, the most difficult thing awaited the Germans: it was necessary to cross the river on the move, despite the powerful long-term defensive structures of the French covering it. Just beyond the Meuse at Sedan lay the key to victory in the campaign. So the planned throw of the von Kleist tank group through the Ardennes was not like an easy walk, many difficulties awaited it along the way. But by themselves, obstacles, barriers and fortifications are not able to stop the attacker, especially if he is sufficiently resolute, equipped and prepared to overcome them.

The French before the war were absolutely sure that the Ardennes were impassable for tanks, and it was impossible to force the fortified Meuse under fire. Therefore, for the defense of the section of the border with Belgium in the Ardennes region, almost 150 km wide and about 100 km deep, only seven second-class infantry divisions were allocated, poorly equipped with anti-tank and anti-aircraft artillery. Each of them covered a front with a width of 15 to 30 km, which was 3-4 times higher than the authorized defense density. These troops had very

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little chance of resisting the sudden onslaught of the elite

German armored and motorized units. And the Germans, due to the noticeable weakening of other sectors of the front, created an overwhelming superiority here. Thus, Army Group "B" was more than twice inferior in strength to the combined forces of its opponents in the north. But their command did not expect too active actions: the successes of the Germans in the north could only damage the plan of the entire campaign. By preventing French and British troops from entering Belgium, it was possible to frustrate the carefully thought-out plan of the operation. In this case, the von Kleist group, after crossing the Meuse, could meet large enemy forces, including mechanized formations, and be drawn into protracted battles. The operational success of the planned strike could only be achieved if the main Allied forces entered Belgium and Holland. Moreover, the larger they were and the deeper they moved north, the better it was for the Germans. That is why the actions of Army Group "B" with the beginning of the German offensive were largely demonstrative in nature. Its troops only created the appearance of a decisive German strike in the manner of the "Schlieffen plan", provoking the advance of French and British forces into Central and Northern Belgium and Holland and diverting the attention of the allied command from the rapidly developing operation in the Ardennes. Although these troops themselves, of course, did not suspect the auxiliary nature of their actions and fought to the conscience. With the same distraction in mind, it was to the north that in the first three days of the campaign the Germans threw almost all the forces of the Luftwaffe. At the same time, his planes did not in any way prevent the troops of the French and British from moving forward. Only German fighters were active in the south at this time, and their main task was to hide the advance of the huge masses of their mobile troops from Allied air reconnaissance.

The German offensive began at dawn on May 10, 1940 with Luftwaffe attacks on airfields, command posts, military depots and the most important industrial centers of Holland, Belgium and France. During the lull at the front, the allied command lost its vigilance. In early May, over 15% of the personnel were on vacation

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skah. The German strike caught the Allied forces by surprise. At 5:35 a.m., the Wehrmacht ground forces launched an invasion of Holland, Belgium, and Luxembourg. The Allied forces, in turn, began to advance according to the "Diel. But even before they approached, the Germans, with a strike by the troops of the 18th Army, supported by the weakest German 9th TD, which had only two tank battalions (a total of 153 tanks), broke the resistance of the Dutch army on the border. At the same time, the 6th Army, with the help of paratroopers, effectively broke through the powerful stationary Belgian border fortifications and, having captured several important bridges across the river. Meuse and the Albrecht Canal, ensured the entry into battle of the 16th MK under the command of General E. Gepner as part of the 3rd and 4th Panzer Divisions. The corps was supposed to advance just in the very place where

Gamelin was waiting for him.

Here, in the direction of the most probable strike of the Wehrmacht in the passage of Gembloux between the rivers Meuse and Dyle, the line of defense of the six best professional French infantry divisions passed. In front of their positions, the Belgians had built in advance a multi-kilometer strip of anti-tank obstacles 2.5 meters high, welded from strong steel T-beams, reinforced with reinforced concrete blocks, barbed wire and mines. Strong reserves were being prepared to repel the German onslaught, including the French 1st and 2nd Panzer Divisions.

A corps under the command of General Prieu, consisting of the 2nd and 3rd mechanized divisions (a total of 415 tanks), was thrown towards the approaching German tank formations with the task of delaying the advance of the Germans until at least May 14th. The German 16th MK E. Hoepner had noticeably more combat vehicles - 655 '. But of these, only R7.Sh and RE./U were able to resist the well-armored French tanks, whose armor thickness reached 40 mmuN-35/38? and 47 mmu3-35.

' The corps included: machine-gun R7.1 - 252, R7.P, armed with a 20-mm cannon - 234, command tanks that did not have guns - 37, R;.Sh, equipped with a 37-mm cannon - 82 , R7. [For those with 75 mm guns - 50 [283].

? The short-barreled 37-mm cannon, mounted on most French H-35/38s, most often could not penetrate the armor protection of medium German tanks, although at that time it did not exceed 30 mm.

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The first massive tank battle of the Second World War took place near the small Belgian town of Anna on May 12, 1940 and lasted for two days. From the French side, only the 3rd MD took part in it. By order of the high command, the personnel 2nd MD was left in reserve, since Gamelin was expecting the rest of the German tank divisions to appear on the battlefield from minute to minute. The crews of the French tanks, which consisted for the most part of poorly trained reservists, fought bravely and gave their opponents many unpleasant minutes. Their equipment was superior to the German one in such basic combat qualities as armament and, especially, armor. The French tank 5-35 stood out in particular, which undoubtedly belonged to the best examples of military vehicles of the beginning of World War II. Its 47-mm cannon was capable of confidently hitting German tanks at a distance of 800-1000 m, while the latter most often could not do anything with it. Only P7. [U could penetrate his armor, but only from a short distance.

The Germans attacked with forces no less than a battalion, up to 80 combat vehicles, each time creating their own numerical strength on the battlefield.

superiority. They acted in close cooperation with their artillery, including 88-mm anti-aircraft guns, and aviation, which supported them directly on the battlefield and also made a significant contribution to the German efforts. True, starting from noon on May 13, the main forces of the Luftwaffe were transferred under Sedan to help Guderian. The French, as a rule, threw four times smaller groups of tanks into battle. Parts of the 3rd MD operated on a 35-kilometer front. Interaction between them, as a rule, was absent. Nevertheless, with well-aimed fire from the spot, the French managed to hold back the onslaught of an entire German tank corps for two long days. The tank battle near Anna did not bring a decisive result to either side. The Prioux corps, having lost 105 of its tanks and knocked out about 160 of the enemy, withdrew, having completed its task to delay the Germans [281]. In the report of the German 35th TP of the 4th TD on the results of the battle at Anna, the actions of the French tanks were described as "devoid of firm leadership, aimless, poorly controlled and tactically illiterate" [282]. Since the battlefield was left behind him

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tsami, they subsequently restored part of their wrecked tanks, while all the French vehicles remaining there were irretrievably lost.

Having discovered the retreat of the enemy, Gepner tried to break through the defenses of the 1st French army at Gembloux on his shoulders. The Germans, without waiting for the approach of their infantry and heavy artillery, for two days stubbornly attacked the positions defended by the 1st Moroccan Infantry and 15th Motorized Divisions. But the defense with a density of 6 km of front per division, saturated with numerous artillery, supported by two separate tank battalions (90 H-35 and B-35 light tanks) withstood. Hoepner's corps suffered heavy losses during these days. On the morning of May 16, the German 4th TD kept in service only 137 tanks out of 314 with which it began the campaign, and out of 24 R7.Yu, only four survived. The 3rd TD lost 20-25% of its tanks [284]. However, Hoepner managed to divert the attention of the French to himself, enabling von Kleist's panzer group to make a decisive breakthrough in the south. The German breakthrough at Sedan forced the French 1st Army to withdraw on the evening of May 15th.

In the zone of action of GA "A", the offensive of the von Kleist tank group began at 5.35 on May 10, 1940, when the advanced units of the 1st TD crossed the border of Luxembourg. The division was in the vanguard of Guderian's 19th Tank Corps, which received the task of reaching the Meuse on the third day of the operation and forcing it on the fourth. In the event of a delay, the Allies could have had the opportunity to bring up fresh reserves to Sedan and withdraw their troops from Belgium in time. This meant the inevitable failure of the Gelb plan, so the Germans from the very beginning led a desperate race against time. "Swift Heinz" announced to his soldiers before the offensive: "I demand that you stay up for at least three nights, if this proves necessary." Guderian did not throw words:

before the onset, the 1st TD received 20,000 tablets of Pervitin [285]. This highly effective stimulant appeared in Germany in 1938 and was widely used in the Wehrmacht during the war, especially among pilots and sailors. It dulled the feelings of pain, hunger and thirst in people who used it, improved their attention and self-confidence, and also markedly reduced the normal human need for

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dream. First of all, it was received by drivers who had to sit at the wheel or levers of transport and combat vehicles for days.

Meanwhile, the Germans had to constantly waste valuable time skirmishing with the Belgians. For example, on the very first day of the operation, a company of the Belgian Ardennes Light Infantry Division fortified itself in the small village of Bodange and tightly sealed the narrow valley along which the 1st TD was advancing. The Belgians, having lost contact with the command, did not receive an order to withdraw and stubbornly held their positions on the commanding heights. It took the Germans as much as seven hours to clear their way.

But most of the time the Germans spent on the constant repair of roads, which the Belgians put out of action with powerful explosive charges in advance. As a result of their explosions, huge craters 15-20 meters in diameter and 6-8 meters deep were created on the roadway. The sappers had to restore roads, blown up bridges and strengthen the old ones, with insufficient carrying capacity, build new additional crossings. As a result of constant delays, inconsistencies, the inevitable confusion and confusion, as well as the rivalry of various parts for the right to use the few roads, traffic jams began to arise on them here and there. On May 12, a gigantic traffic jam 250 km long formed on the northern route, which began in Germany, from the Rhine itself. Ras did not manage to drag him the next day. Fortunately for the Germans, all Allied combat aviation was involved in Northern Belgium, where the main forces of the Luft Waffe also fought. Nevertheless, the advanced units of Guderian moved forward uncontrollably, sweeping away all resistance in their path.

For the first time, French air reconnaissance spotted German motorized columns on the Ardennes roads on the night of May 11th. The French immediately threw five cavalry divisions and three cavalry brigades into the Ardennes. In the afternoon of the same day, the first skirmishes between the advanced units of German tankers and French cavalry took place there, who immediately reported this to their command. But from the first reports it is impossible

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was to understand the scale of the unfolding events, and [and Melen assessed them as an ordinary distraction. Undoubtedly, this conclusion was facilitated by the German disinformation campaign launched by the office of Dr. Goebbels. The entire huge apparatus of German propaganda at full power continued to inflate and exalt the successes of the airborne and tank troops in the north. At the same time, the offensive in the Ardennes was hushed up or mentioned in passing as an auxiliary operation.

The French cavalry, reinforced with light armored vehicles, could not resist the onslaught of the German tank units and was quickly driven back. The Germans tightly covered their advancing grouping through the Ardennes with anti-aircraft fire and fighters, so the main information about the situation there was delivered to the allies only by night reconnaissance aircraft. Every night their reports became more and more alarming, but the French command still maintained an imperturbable calm. It was based on miscalculations of time: old-school French military leaders, like Halder in his time, believed that the Germans would need nine days to cross the Ardennes, and some of them even estimated this time as two weeks. [Amelin once called the Meuse River "the best anti-tank ditch in Europe" and had no doubt that in order to attempt to cross it, the Wehrmacht would necessarily have to first bring in a mass of heavy artillery with the appropriate amount of ammunition. And their transfer, given the poor capacity of the local road network, will take at least another week. According to all these assessments, the Allies had ample time to respond appropriately to any developments in the center of their front.

However, the first German tanks reached the river. Meuse, 40 km north of Sedan, already in the afternoon of May 12, just 57 hours after the start of the offensive (see Diagram 5). They immediately, without waiting for the approach of their infantry and artillery, began preparations for forcing the river. In the entire corps of Guderian there were only 141 field guns, but they had not yet had time to bring enough ammunition to them. On the opposite shore

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After the start of the war, the French managed to build a line of concrete and wood-and-earth defensive structures with a density of up to 10 per kilometer. Here the defense was not sufficiently prepared by the 55th Infantry Division, stretched along the Meuse on a front 20 km wide. The 71st Infantry Division came to its aid the day before, which took over a 6-kilometer section from the 55th Infantry Division, giving it the opportunity to significantly condense its defenses. Taking into account the cannons and howitzers of the 41st Infantry Corps available in the sector of the 55th Infantry Division, the French had a triple superiority in artillery [286].

The Germans compensated for the lack of artillery with powerful air support. Guderian, together with the aviation commanders, developed a plan for an air offensive that had never been seen before. To do this, units of the 3rd Air Fleet consisting of 620 fighters and 850 bombers, of which 250 were dive bombers, were transferred to the direction of the actions of the von Kleist tank group. Of these, 300 fighters and 510 bombers, including 200 dive bombers, were deployed in direct support of Guderian. Aviation preparation on May 13 continued continuously from 12.00 to 16.00 - the time the attack began. After that, German aircraft began to bomb the artillery and enemy reserves. The bombardment continued until dark. In the direction of the main strike in a strip 4 km wide, the bombers made 1215 sorties [287]. The hours-long "conveyor of death" had a devastating effect. The garrisons of the French fortifications were stunned, demoralized and deprived of any communication, their control system completely out of order. At the same time, the direct damage from the bombardment was not so great: the 55th Infantry Division lost only 56 people, and not a single pillbox was completely destroyed. Attempts to suppress them with gunfire from the opposite bank were unsuccessful. The first attempts by the Germans to cross the Meuse in inflatable assault boats near the northern outskirts of Sedan were repulsed by the French. The garrisons of the strongholds carried out well-aimed fire at pre-sighted areas.

The 1st TD, which was at the forefront of the German offensive, was maximally reinforced with artillery and infantry at the expense of other divisions of the corps. In addition, she was subjected to moto

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the organized regiment "Grossdeutschland" (it included a battery of six assault guns), along with the 43rd assault engineer battalion attached to it, equipped with a mobile collapsible pontoon bridge. The powerful 88-mm anti-aircraft guns, urgently advanced forward, finally managed to break through the thick steel plates and concrete walls of the pillboxes in the forcing area. Under their cover, two German companies crossed the river and began to storm the pillboxes one by one. By the end of the day, they managed to break through the French defense line with a fight and take the key height 247, four kilometers from the crossing point. At 10:30 p.m., the sappers completed building the bridge, and soon the entire Great Germany Regiment in full force was on the western bank of the Meuse. On the next morning, his anti-tank company, armed with 12 37-mm guns, with the support of two 88-mm anti-aircraft guns, successfully repelled a strong counterattack by French tanks. The Germans reported the destruction of 44 enemy tanks without losing a single man. At the same time, parts of the 19th MK Guderian began crossing the Meuse in other areas. The 1st MP, using a one and a half kilometer gap between the French pillboxes, relatively easily crossed the river. The second wave of attackers was led by Guderian himself. Assault groups break through non-stop

rushed forward, not paying attention to the dividing lines between units and formations. In 8 hours of continuous fighting, the regiment completely crossed the river and moved forward 8 km, breaking through three lines of French fortifications.

In the sector of the 10th TD, which did not enter the Meuse at full strength, things were not so good. The fact is that only the 1st TD, which was in the forefront of the corps, used all the available roads. The rest of the divisions were allocated no more than two routes. Therefore, the 10th TD did not enter the Meuse at full strength. 20 minutes before the scheduled crossing time, the commander of her 86th motorized infantry regiment reported to the commander of his brigade, Colonel Fisher, that the inflatable boats had not yet been brought up, so the offensive had to be postponed. Enraged, Fischer personally rushed to the regiment, built it and ordered to cross the river of 70 meters wide by swimming, if there was no other way. At the same time, he himself

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sewed to lead one of the assault groups. The Germans were lucky: the boats arrived literally at the last moment. But while they were inflated and distributed among the soldiers, time was lost. The French managed to recover from the bombardment and opened heavy fire from guns and machine guns. Most of the attackers did not even manage to reach the river, the open space in front of which was 600-800 meters wide.

Only a small group of 12 soldiers managed to cross, half of whom were sappers. They went through a special training course for combating pillboxes and had a supply of explosives with them. Finding themselves on the enemy coast without officers and without communications, the Germans did not lose their heads and began to act independently, as they had been taught. Using the gaps between the bunkers that were not shot through, they approached their walls, which did not have embrasures, undermined them, and threw grenades at them. Acting in this way, a dozen soldiers successively destroyed or captured seven DO Tov, punching a hole in the French defense system. This success was immediately used by the units of the regiment. In the evening, sappers of the 10th TD began to build a bridge across the river in the area of the captured bridgehead. The next day, at 06.45 am, the division's vehicles rolled across it to the western bank of the Meuse [288].

The 2nd TD reached the Maas as the last of the formations of the 19th Corps, when others had already begun crossing. She was late for an hour and a half due to traffic jams and tried to cross the river on the move, trying to make up for lost time. However, all German attempts failed, until two platoons of sappers from the 1st TD, acting on their own initiative, destroyed 11 French bunkers in the area of their neighbors. This made it possible for the 2nd TD at 20.00 to finally catch on to the other bank. When night fell, under the cover of darkness, the division's sappers set up a ferry crossing.

Thus, in just half a day of fighting, the motorized infantry of Guderian's corps not only crossed the Meuse, but, in fact, broke through the line of stationary French fortifications located across the river on the first attempt. Guderian, who did not expect such a quick success, allowed his tankers to rest on the approaches to the Meuse. Although the bridge of the appropriate carrying capacity was ready immediately after the floor

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German flamethrowers storm the French bunker

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night, the first tanks went on it only after seven in the morning on May 14th. Guderian immediately learned from this mistake and always formed mixed battle groups in the future,  
including tanks.

Meanwhile, at about seven o'clock in the evening, a serious panic arose in the French rear and began to grow rapidly. The artillerymen from the second line were the first to succumb to it, while the infantry on the front line still continued to resist. Crowds of soldiers and officers retreating from the front line poured along the roads. Fear has big eyes: the French thought that they were being pursued by German tanks, which in fact appeared there no earlier than 12 hours later. The posts of the military police were crushed by huge crowds of fleeing. Almost the entire French 55th Infantry Division abandoned its positions, taking with it most of the neighboring 71st Infantry Division.

On the morning of May 14, German tanks actually rushed in masses into the breakthrough made for them by the infantry. They walked across the only bridge that was built by sappers | th td. This bridge immediately assumed a particular importance. It was he who provided the main cargo flow to supply all the necessary German troops beyond the Meuse and allowed the transfer of heavy equipment there. The Allied command immediately assessed the degree of threat and immediately threw all available aviation forces to destroy it. The pilots of 250 fighters and 152 bombers were ordered to destroy the bridge at any cost. Desperate attempts by the Allied air forces to disable it lasted all day, but did not bring any success.

And no wonder, because the Germans, in turn, gathered for the defense of the crossing all the available forces of anti-aircraft artillery - 303 guns, including 36 88-mm guns. Luftwaffe fighters made 814 sorties that day to cover the bridge. At noon on May 14, the commander of GA "A" von Rundstedt personally visited the crossing site to make sure that everything had been done to protect the bridge, and met there

with the ubiquitous Guderian. Together, German anti-aircraft gunners and pilots shot down 52 Allied bombers and 50 fighters, and another 65 of their aircraft were so badly damaged that they were out of order [289]. From such a stunning defeat, accompanied by such a heavy

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heavy losses, the allied aviation was no longer able to recover until the very end of the campaign. She never again managed to organize any similar massing of forces for an air battle on one sector of the front. Backlash waffe finally seized dominance in the sky. But most importantly, the Germans managed to keep the most valuable bridge safe and sound. And then they didn't have a single spare pontoon nearby to repair it in case of need, so even one precisely placed bomb could put the bridge out of action for a long time. On the same day, the main forces of the 19th MK, consisting of 60,000 men and 22,000 various vehicles, including 850 tanks, were transferred across the Meuse.

French reserves were already advancing to meet them. But their march was slowed down by the huge crowds of retreating soldiers who blocked all the roads. The French commanders clearly lacked independence and determination. Their unhurried World War I tactics were hopelessly inferior to the Wehrmacht's tactics, built on speed and continuous onslaught. French troops were constantly late in the occupation of important objects and key points in the area. Therefore, the most favorable moment for the liquidation of the German bridgehead on the Meuse was hopelessly missed. Such a moment was the night of May 13-14, when the Germans had not yet had time to throw their heavy equipment across the river, and their infantry was exhausted to the limit by continuous forced marches and battles.

Having broken through Luxembourg and Belgium and seized the bridgehead behind the Meuse, Guderian completely fulfilled the task assigned to him, losing only about 120 killed and about 400 wounded in the battles at Sedan on May 13-14. According to the German operational plan, the 19th MK was supposed to stop there and wait for the approach of infantry divisions, which were instructed to change its units on the bridgehead. The German command considered a large separation of mobile formations from the infantry too risky. However, passive waiting was not at all in the nature of the "fast-moving Heinz", who did not want to give the French the opportunity to restore their torn front. But it was not easy to decide to ignore the order of the higher authorities. Reason not

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made me wait a long time. Shortly after noon on May 14, a report came that the advance detachment of the 1st TD had just captured

took down the intact bridge over the Canal of the Ardennes at Malmi. Guderian immediately went there, assessed the situation and at 2 o'clock in the afternoon gave the order to the 1st and 2nd Panzer divisions to move forward to the west, without waiting for the approach of the infantry. The task of defending the bridgehead at Sedan was assigned to the 10th TD and MP "Gross Germany".

Guderian took a big risk, but the game was undoubtedly worth the candle. In case of success of his breakthrough to the English Channel, 1.7 million selected Allied soldiers fell into the trap. This, in essence, decided the fate of the entire campaign in one fell swoop. The tank general finally got a real opportunity to personally test his theories of the operational use of tank forces in practice. Time has proven Guderian right.

It is now known that on the afternoon of May 14, the French command still had quite sufficient operational reserves at its disposal to throw the Germans from the bridgehead at Sedan with one blow, cutting off the German 1st and 2nd tank divisions that had left it. At this time, the main forces of the 10th TD were connected by battle with the French 71st Infantry Division and could not take the positions intended for them. Only one MP "Grossdeutschland" defended the bridgehead. Against him the French had a force of more than six divisions, one of which was armored and one was motorized. But the French were too cautious, did not have time to bring reserves into battle and missed their chance. The troops retreating from Sedan reported panicky reports of hundreds and even thousands of German tanks pursuing them. Alarmed by such news, the commander of the 21st ac, General Flavigny, considered it good to postpone the attack already scheduled for 17.30 and go on the defensive. At the same time, tank divisions of the French 3rd TD were dispersed over a 20-kilometer front to reinforce the defending infantry and organize local counterattacks.

The next day, serious fighting began near the small village of Stonn, located on a steep, densely forested hill 15 km south of Sedan. Guderian ordered the Grossdeutschland Regiment, supported by the 43rd Assault Defense Engineer Battalion and the 2nd Tank Battalion from the 8th

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tp 10th TD to seize it in order to eliminate the possibility of French counterattacks from this direction. At dawn on May 15, the Germans attacked and by 8 o'clock in the morning cleared Stonn from the French defending it. But it turned out to be only at the beginning. The French stubbornly counterattacked, the Germans did not want to give in, and by 10.45 the village changed hands four times.

On the same day, events took place that were very characteristic of the then French style of warfare. At 07.15 in the morning, the commander of the North-Eastern Front, General Georges, ordered the commander of the 2nd Army, General Hunt Zieger, to immediately launch an attack on the German bridgehead at

Sedan's available mobile connections. At 0800, Hüntziger sent the appropriate order to General Flavigny. He received it half an hour later, but he called the commanders of the 3rd Panzer and 3rd Motorized Divisions to him only at 10.00, and scheduled the attack for 2 o'clock in the afternoon. However, it turned out to be impossible to quickly gather the tanks dispersed the previous day into a fist. As it turned out, on many of them the radio stations did not work due to discharged batteries, so their crews did not respond to calls. The attack had to be postponed first for two hours, and then until 18.30. In the end, at 18.15 Flavigny had to cancel the offensive altogether [290]. On this, another attempt to eliminate the German bridgehead at Sedan ended, almost never having begun. On this day, May 15, Holland was forced to capitulate.

The German breakthrough at Sedan sounded like a bolt from the blue for the French command. The power, depth and speed of the German strikes overturned all the ideas of the Allies on the operational capabilities of the Wehrmacht. Moreover, the entry of Guderian's troops into the operational space made them urgently faced with the need to urgently unravel the further plans of the Germans. And before those, three main possibilities opened up: to move to Paris, to advance in the direction of the English Channel, or to go to the rear of the Maginot Line.

The confusion of the French command was aggravated by the actions of Army Group C under the command of Colonel General W. von Leeb. She carried out the task of pinning down the French troops defending the Maginot Line, and did not

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give them the opportunity to launch a counterattack on von Kleist's tank group from the south. Von Leeb, who had only 19 divisions against 36 French, had to pretend for the most part to be active, because he did not have enough strength to actually manifest it. The Germans masterfully conducted a targeted disinformation campaign, giving the French a greatly exaggerated idea of their capabilities and a false idea of their plans. They organized several false headquarters of large formations, in which only sentries were real. The same trains, moving back and forth, simulated intensive transfers of troops and carefully covered with tarpaulin military equipment. Sound recordings at night created a completely plausible impression of the movements of large military columns, including numerous tanks. A well-coordinated series of various military, political and diplomatic events, supported by skillfully spread rumors, very convincingly demonstrated the intention of the Wehrmacht from day to day to bypass the "Maginot Line" from the south, through the territory of Switzerland, violating its centuries-old neutrality.

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The Germans did not confine themselves to disinformation alone. On May 14, they began an intensive shelling of the fortifications.

at Schonenburg, using heavy artillery with a caliber of up to 280 mm. Then two super-powerful 420-mm guns [291] joined it. And on the northern flank of the "Majino Line" a decisive attack began on one of its fortified nodes - La Ferte, located 25 km southeast of Sedan. On May 16, the 71st Infantry Division went to storm the small French Fort No. 505, while the 15th and 68th Infantry Divisions ensured the isolation of the combat area. The next day, the Germans brought nine 210-mm mortars to the fort, each shell weighing 135 kg. In two days, these mortars, along with five batteries of other guns, rained down more than 2,500 shells on the fort [292]. On the evening of May 18, sappers, under cover of fire from 88-mm anti-aircraft guns, managed to get close to the fort and began to systematically undermine its fortifications. A strong fire started inside, causing numerous explosions of ammunition. Early on the morning of May 19, Fort No. 505 fell silent. Its entire garrison of 107 people died in underground

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shelters, mainly from poisoning by poisonous gases formed as a result of fire and explosions.

These actions by the Germans, combined with their southward push on Stonne, where the dominant high ground changed hands 17 times in three days of fighting, led the French to believe that the Maginot Line was the main danger. They hastily began to move reinforcements there. But the left wing of the 2nd Army had to be pulled back somewhat in order to cover its rear from a possible attack by Guderian's corps. As a result, more than 130 bunkers were left without a fight, and the gap in the French front increased from six to 30 km.

Meanwhile, the initiative was still firmly in German hands. Using the sluggishness of the French, the 1st and 2nd Panzer divisions of the Wehrmacht captured three bridges over the Ardennes Canal intact and intact and quickly went through them forward to the west. Separate French units offered them stubborn resistance. However, the heroic efforts and self-sacrifice of ordinary soldiers and junior officers were not able to compensate for the fatal mistakes, indecision, inertia and hopelessly outdated methods of warfare of the French high and middle command. The 19th MK continued on its way to the English Channel, and there was no one to stop it.

In addition, the 41st MK under the command of General G. Reinhardt, as part of the 6th and 8th tank divisions, as well as the 2nd motorized division, was advancing to the right of it. Due to congestion on the mountain roads, it was slightly behind schedule. On May 13, units of the 6th TD of General V. Kempf nevertheless managed to force the Meuse and seize the bridgehead at Montherme. On May 15, after a heavy battle, by 09.30 in the morning, the division completely broke through the French defenses, which included numerous pillboxes and armored cupolas.



la. The battle group of the division, consisting of tank, motorcycle and engineer battalions, with the support of artillery, anti-tank and anti-aircraft gunners, by 20 o'clock made its way to the village of Montcornet, 65 km from the crossing point [293]. The next day, Kempf met Guderian at Montcornet. Thus, two separate German bridgeheads behind the Meuse merged

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into one. On the same day, the 8th TD caught up with the 6th and Reinhardt's corps continued the offensive in full force. On their way was the French 2nd TD. She was obviously unlucky from the very beginning of the war: in five days she received five conflicting orders. The command transferred the connection from place to place, while the tracked vehicles were transported by rail to save the resource, and the wheeled vehicles went on their own. It is not surprising that in the chaos of the war, the units of the division were scattered anywhere, and many of them were completely lost. Tankers, ammunition trucks, and repair teams were cut off from their tanks. Of the 12 tank companies, the whereabouts of only seven were known. The tanks of some of them were still standing on railway platforms without fuel when they came under attack from the German 41st MK. As a result, the French 2nd TD ceased to exist on May 16, having failed to inflict any damage on the enemy.

The 15th MK of General G. Goth (5th and 7th TD) covered the right flank of the von Kleist shock tank group. The corps was supposed to overcome the Meuse not on French, but on Belgian territory, where there were no longer fortifications of the Maginot Line. The success of the crossing depended on whether Gotha's formations would have time to reach the Meuse before the French troops advancing there. The French 5th MDI of the 18th Infantry Division had to pass 80 km without any interference and take up defense along a wide river in positions prepared in advance for them by the Belgians. They were not particularly in a hurry, believing that it would take the Germans at least 10 days to reach the Meuse. This misjudgment cost the French dearly.

At the forefront of the 15th MK was the 7th TD, commanded by General E. Rommel, who later won wide fame as the commander of the African Corps. On the 115-kilometer route to the Meuse, the Germans had to overcome numerous roadblocks and fight their way through the barriers of the Belgian infantry and advanced units of the French cavalry. Already on May 12, at about 17.30, the German reconnaissance group reached the bridge over the Meuse near Yvoire. At the last moment, the commander of the Belgian sapper platoon, Lieutenant Wispeler, at the cost of his life, managed to blow up the bridge along with the German reconnaissance armored vehicle that jumped onto it

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Noah. Another bridge over the Meuse, located 7 km south,

at Dinan, flew into the air even earlier. But military luck still did not turn away from the Germans. The motorcyclists of the forward detachment of the 5th TD found in the area of the village of U, halfway from Yvoire to Dinant, a surviving lock and immediately crossed along it, first to the island of the same name in the middle of the river, and then to the opposite bank. It was they who were the first Germans on the west bank of the Meuse, ahead of even the soldiers of Guderian. There they were immediately noticed and fired upon from afar by a French infantry company, but they did not dare to throw a handful of Germans into the river with a counterattack in the dark. Thus, a small foothold was in German hands. On the morning of May 13, under the cover of fire from approaching tanks, already three motorized infantry battalions of the 5th TD crossed there and expanded it by 4 km to the west on the day of the battle.

Meanwhile, the attempt by units of the neighboring 7th TD to cross the Meuse at Dinan ended in failure due to insufficient support from small artillery. And almost all German aviation that day was involved in Sedan, Rommel decided to move the direction of the main efforts of the division to the south, near the bridgehead of the 5th TD. Personally leading one of the motorized infantry battalions of his division, Rommel on an assault boat crossed the Meuse, which reached a width of 100 meters there, and joined up with the company that had been fighting there since the morning. Rommel was no stranger to playing such a role. Even during the First World War, he gained extensive experience in commanding assault groups. Rommel ordered, despite the constant shelling, to establish a ferry crossing and began to transfer heavy equipment to the bridgehead. By the next morning, 30 tanks had already been delivered there.

The Germans owed much of their success to the passivity of their opponents. French commanders often lost contact with their units and formations, were constantly late with counterattacks, did not want to fight in the dark, and, most importantly, they could not manage to establish interaction between their troops. The ever-changing environment required them to make quick independent decisions and vigorously implement them, but they were never taught to do so. The habit of blindly following other people's orders did the French a disservice. They were completely unprepared for the

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the war that the Germans imposed on them from the very beginning, and they did not have enough time to adapt to new conditions.

So, on May 13, the French 1st TD, ready to be transferred to Northern Belgium, was only 40 km from Dinan. Only on the night of May 14, a day after the first German soldiers of the Gotha corps crossed the Meuse, she received a preliminary order to prepare for a counterattack of the German bridgehead. But the order for a counterattack came only at 2 o'clock in the afternoon, and the first divisions of the division began to march to the front after two hours of training. Until evening, the French slowly made their way through the roads clogged with refugees and the retreating remnants of the defeated

units and divisions. At the same time, they were greatly stretched out and lost their stray tankers. Due to lack of fuel, we had to stop for the night at Flavion. By that time, Rommel had already managed to break through the French front near the small town of Onay and immediately threw him into the gap

their tanks.

The next morning, German dive bombers smashed on the march several columns of French benzo right-handers. The few survivors were able to get to their tanks only by 9 o'clock in the morning. A long process of refueling began, when tank trucks drove up to the tanks and poured fuel into their tanks sequentially, one after the other. The Germans organized this process in a completely different way. [Fuel was delivered to its destination in 20-liter canoes on ordinary trucks. At the distribution points, they were instantly thrown to the ground, the tankers quickly dismantled the canisters, independently filled all the tanks at the same time and returned the empty canisters back. There they were picked up by the same trucks and put back into circulation, and some of the full canisters were carried by the tanks for refueling if necessary.

At the most unfortunate moment of refueling for the French, two battalions of the 1st TD came under attack from German tanks of the 7th TD passing by. Having quickly defeated this enemy, Rommel did not get involved in the battle with the main forces of the French, but preferred to outflank them from the south and rushed further to the west. An unenviable share of fighting with numerous well-armored and armed cannons of the French

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he provided his neighbor, the 5th TD, with Tsuz military vehicles. At that moment, only its 31st TP, consisting of two battalions, was on the battlefield, and the 15th TP was still crossing the Meuse and arrived to the rescue later.

However, numerical superiority did not save the French. Due to the poor organization of communications, the control of the unit was absent, and the crews of the tanks fought, in essence, alone. They were unable to resist the onslaught of the Germans, who pressed on from all sides and shot them point-blank. Even the light German tanks managed to play a useful role in this battle, making quick diversionary attacks on the flanks, stretching the French forces and breaking up their ranks. The German artillery also immediately moved forward and helped their tankers a lot. In addition, the Germans called in aircraft. To top it all off, part of the French tanks, which did not have time to fully refuel before the battle, ran out of fuel and were abandoned by their crews. By evening, the French received the order to withdraw. The next morning, only 16 tanks remained in the division. So in just one day of the battle, the personnel French | -I td lost almost all of their main military equipment. ◀

Meanwhile, Rommel's division, having escaped to the opera-

open space, cut off the supply lines of the French, sowed panic in their rear and managed to slip through the line, where the French command planned to create a new line of defense, almost without interference. Thus, on May 15, the organized resistance behind the Meuse finally collapsed. As a result of powerful synchronized strikes by Guderian's motorized corps, as well as Kempf's and Rommel's panzer divisions, a gaping gap of more than 100 km wide between La Ferte and Namur was formed in the 809-kilometer Allied defense system. There was no way to close it. The French 7th Army, previously intended for the role of a strategic reserve, following the order of Gamelin, was very far from the place of the breakthrough, on the Dutch coast near Breda. Meanwhile, even on May 14 in Belgium, numerous columns of selected French and English troops, without suspecting anything, continued to move eastward, i.e. headed straight for the carefully placed

a huge German trap for them... 224

A French tanker from a wrecked tank B \$ 11 surrenders to the Germans as a prisoner

The catastrophe of the allies in the central sector of the front had a stunning effect on the top leadership of France and greatly shook their faith in victory. At half past eight on the morning of May 15, Prime Minister Reynaud telephoned his British colleague and closest ally, Churchill, and dejectedly declared: "We have lost the battle" [294]. The French Commander-in-Chief Gamelin, on the same day, also realized that he had suffered an inevitable defeat, and in the evening reported this to Minister of Defense Daladier. His initial failure with Diehl's plan had by then turned into an irreparable mistake. Unfortunately, Gamelin failed to recognize and correct her when it was still not too late.

Meanwhile, Guderian persistently drove his corps to the English Channel, sparing neither himself nor his soldiers and not turning

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attention to extended and open flanks. He considered their best defense to be continuous movement, which did not allow the enemy to recover and organize a counterattack. Such a philosophy, too bold for them, was not shared by the absolute majority of the top German leadership, including Hitler himself. On May 17, at von Rundstadt's command post in Bastogne, he more than definitely stated his point of view on this matter, and it was recorded in the combat log of GA "A":

"The Führer emphasized the special importance of the southern flank, not only for purely army operations, but also in political and psychological terms. Now it's impossible anywhere

allow not the slightest setback that could, fatally for us, cheer up not only the military, but, more importantly, the political leadership of our enemies. At the moment, the solution must lie not so much in a rapid advance to the English Channel, but in the organization of an impenetrable defense at the turn of the river Aisne, in the Lane region and further along the Somme in the shortest possible time.

On the same day, Halder wrote in his diary:

"The Fuhrer is terribly nervous. He is afraid of his own success, does not want to take risks, and would most willingly delay our further progress. The pretext is preoccupation with the left flank" [296]

Hitler's usual adventurism this time was replaced by excessive caution. Now that victory was so close, he got excited and decided to play it safe. In contrast, always calm and reasonable, Halder was absolutely sure that everything was developing according to plan. Air reconnaissance data convincingly testified that nobody and nothing seriously threatened Guderian's left flank. It is not surprising that Halder had a desire to implement Manstein's original plan and, with the forces of GA "A", deliver a second blow in a southerly direction, without waiting for the results of the first, in order to prevent the French from coming to their senses and gathering strength. If this operation is successful, Fran

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tion would be completely defeated in the shortest possible time. However, Hitler, oppressed by his ill presentiments, categorically rejected this bold idea and ordered the 12th Army to stop the offensive and take up defense on the River Aisne.

On the morning of May 17, another event took place, directly related to the desire of the highest German generals to stop and bring up the infantry before continuing the offensive. Guderian's immediate superior, von Kleist, dismissed him from his post as commander of the 19th MK for refusing to stop at the Vervin-Moncor not-Diesy-le-Gros line assigned to him. However, in the afternoon, the commander of the 12th Army, List, who had been subordinated to von Kleist's tank group since May 15, at the direction of von Rundstedt, reinstated Guderian in his former position.

But on this day, Guderian's misadventures were not yet over. Not far from his headquarters in Montcornet was the French 4th TD. She was still in the process of formation, having managed to receive only 3.5 tank battalions instead of four

state, and had no infantry at all. Its commander, Colonel Charles de Gaulle, one of the theorists of the use of tanks and the future president of France, was appointed to his post after the start of the campaign, on May 11th. The division was given the task of organizing the defense on the River Aisne. But de Gaulle was eager to fight, and on the morning of May 17 he decided to capture the important highway junction at Montcornet. His attack came as a complete surprise to the Germans and gave them a lot of trouble. The French intercepted and destroyed several German transport columns on the road and dangerously approached Guderian's headquarters.

To eliminate this threat, the Germans threw everything they had at hand, including several freshly repaired tanks. Ju-87 dive-bombers attacked the 4th TD from the air, and the German 10th TD, which had just arrived in the Montcornet area, counterattacked on its flank. De Gaulle had to retreat, but two days later he organized a new attack, this time 30 km to the west, near the village of Crecy-sur-Sere. And again, the main role in repelling his attack was played by the Luftwaffe. At the same time, both times, their own aviation did not provide de Gaulle with any support. Yes, and could not, because in

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The French army, unlike the Wehrmacht, had neither air liaison officers nor radio stations dedicated to that purpose.

The order to stop was received not only by the tank group of von Kleist, but also by the 15th MK Gotha. On May 16, he approached through Belgium to the border with France, on which there were long-term fortifications, albeit not as powerful as the Maginot Line, but quite serious. Therefore, the commander of the 4th army, General von Kluge, who was given the Gotha corps, decided to break through the French front with the infantry forces of the 5th ak and only then introduce them into the breakthrough tanks. Rommel's 7th TD was given the task of probing the enemy's defenses, but not breaking through it in the event of serious resistance and, under any conditions, not going far ahead without the permission of the army command. Gotha radioed Rommel the preliminary order to advance in the direction of Aven. A written order detailing all the restrictions arrived at the command post of the 7th TD when Rommel was no longer there.

At 6 p.m., German tanks crossed the French border at Clarefait and soon found a fixed line of defense behind it: pillboxes, armored domes, minefields and barbed wire. This impressive spectacle did not bother Rommel in the least, and he decided on the move, without preparation, in the gathering twilight to make a breakthrough. Using surprise, the Germans broke into the French positions before they had time to open fire. Tanks fired at point-blank embrasures of bunkers, sappers destroyed them using explosives and flamethrowers, motorcyclists disabled anti-tank guns and machine-gun nests. Breaking through the fortifications with a fight

niya of the French, combat vehicles of the 25th TP, accompanied by the 7th motorcycle and 37th reconnaissance battalions of the 7th TD, rushed forward. At about 11 pm they broke through the second line of defense at Solre-le-Château on the move and continued on their way to Aven. Unfortunately, the French 5th MD stopped for the night just on their way. Together with it, some units of the 18th Infantry and 1st Panzer divisions were located. Long columns of military equipment and vehicles of the French crowded on both roadsides, becoming an easy target for German tankers. After their passage

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on a section of the highway about 10 km long, hundreds of cars were left on fire or dumped into ditches. The awakening of the French soldiers and officers, who felt completely safe, was a nightmare. Terrified, they did not even try to resist and fled through the surrounding fields and forests.

Around midnight, German tanks broke into Aven and encountered the remnants of the French 1st TD, which had previously been beaten near Flavion. For four hours fierce street fighting continued, in which the French lost 13 tanks, until finally their last surviving three tanks retreated from Aven. However, Rommel did not rest on this either. He again led his group forward, walked another 18 km, and at 6 o'clock in the morning captured the bridge over the Sambre River in Landrecy on the move. Finally, after another half an hour, he stopped in the hills east of Le Cateau. He stopped not of his own free will, just by that time his tanks had almost completely used up ammunition and fuel. His forces consisted of only two tank battalions and a few motorcyclist platoons. The third tank battalion and reconnaissance battalion lagged behind somewhere. Communication with the main forces of the division was lost, and, as it turned out later, they quietly spent the night on the territory of Belgium.

It is difficult to say for sure whether communication with Rommel during his raid was lost for technical reasons, or whether he deliberately avoided negotiations with his superiors so that they would not interfere with him. But the place of his final stop was 50 km from the nearest German troops, too far to be heard on the radio station he had. The position of the Germans was completely unenviable: without communication, ammunition and fuel, they ended up deep behind enemy lines and seemed to be doomed. The restless Rommel decided to personally restore contact with his division and, accompanied by a P7 tank, [III] drove back. Soon the tank broke down, and Rommel made most of the way in his lone armored car, from time to time engaging in battle with units of the French call that came across along the way. However, most often he imperiously suggested that they surrender, and they, demoralized by panic and the picture of complete defeat after the recent night battle, obeyed, folded

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weapons and under their own power dutifully went into captivity. Rommel drove into Aven at the head of a column of 40 French military trucks captured by him. There, to his great relief, he met the vanguard of his division.

For such arbitrariness, Rommel risked getting under the tribunal, but the winners are not judged. And he achieved no small success: in addition to breaking through two lines of defense and capturing key points, including an intact bridge over the Sambre, his battle group defeated and dispersed many French formations along the way. On May 17, about 10,000 Frenchmen were captured in the area of operations of his division. At the same time, the losses of Rommel himself for the period of May 16-17 were surprisingly low: 40 killed and 75 wounded [297]. After these sensational events, the 7th TD received the nickname "ghost division" in the Wehrmacht.

The successes of the von Kleist tank group exceeded all expectations and encouraged the German command to create another such formation. On May 17, the 16th MK Gepner and the 39th MK Schmidt were transferred to GA "A", subordinating them to Gotu. The directorate of his 15th MK became the headquarters of a new tank group. It is noteworthy how easily the Germans created large formations in the course of hostilities, shuffled their formations and used them on the move with high efficiency. This was possible due to the high level of training of troops and staffs, capable of quickly establishing command and control and effective interaction between new formations.

After the regrouping, all tank divisions of the Wehrmacht became part of the GA "A". This did not happen by chance, because the further offensive of GA "B" only led to the frontal pushing of the allies out of Belgium, while the thrust of GA "A" to the English Channel cut off the allied troops in Belgium from the rest of the army and doomed them to a quick death. The prospect of such a dizzying success led Hitler to agree to a resumption of the offensive on 19 May. On the very first day, the 2nd TD, which had stagnated for two days of inactivity, traveled 90 km and by evening reached Abbeville in the lower reaches of the Somme River.

At 2 am on May 20, the Germans reached the coast of the English Channel. Thus, 29 French divisions from 1,

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The 7th and parts of the 9th armies, 12 divisions of the British Expeditionary Force and 22 divisions of the Belgian army were pressed to the sea in an area measuring 140 by 200 km. Manstein's fruitful idea was successfully implemented. And although it was still necessary to finish off the encircled Allied troops, and then finish off the rest of the French army, the final result of the campaign in the West is no longer anyone



raised no doubts.

Rommel's 7th TD also went forward through Cambrai to Arras. On May 21, she was to go west south of Arras and immediately turn right to capture the bridges on the Scarpa River 10 km northwest of the city. According to the plan, the 5th TD was supposed to cover its open right flank, but it lagged behind. Therefore, when the 25th TP, as usual, led by Rommel himself, went forward, the motorized infantry of his division following him came under an unexpectedly strong blow from the north, from Arras, by the forces of two English tank battalions, supported by infantry and artillery. They consisted of 88 tanks, of which only 14 were light machine guns with bulletproof armor. The rest were much more serious opponents for the Germans. Among them were 16 Matilda MK.P tanks with a 40-mm cannon, protected by strong armor 78 mm thick and 58 Matilda MK.I, which had 60-mm armor, although they were armed with only one machine gun. German tank and anti-tank guns were powerless against the armor of the Matilda, even in the case of point-blank firing.

The attack was carried out in two columns, each of which included a tank and infantry battalions, an artillery battalion, anti-tank guns and reconnaissance units. The British immediately broke through the battle formations of the 7th TD and hit the 3rd battalion of the 2nd MP division of the SS "Dead Head", which was advancing to the south and did not have anti-tank weapons [298]. Some of the SS men, taken by surprise, for whom this battle was the very first, took to flight. Further, British tanks intercepted on the roads and defeated the columns of trucks and infantry of the 6th and 7th mp from the 7th TD.

And here it is necessary to pay tribute to Rommel, who found himself in the thick of the battle. Thanks in large part to the personal

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the measure of its commander, the 7th TD did not flinch. The British light tanks and infantry following the Matildas were stopped. At this time, Rommel quickly organized a second line of defense in the rear, reinforced by the invariable lifesaver of the German army - 88-mm anti-aircraft guns. It was they who stopped the seemingly invulnerable Matilda. Rommel's 25th TP also urgently turned back to the rescue of his infantry. He was supposed to go to the rear of the British, but met with a group of about 60 French tanks, which were covering their allies. After a fierce battle, accompanied by heavy losses on both sides, the Germans broke the resistance of the French, but soon ran into the positions of the British anti-tank guns. After 6 p.m. (two hours after the call), dive bombers appeared over the battlefield, which, within two and a half hours before dark, made 300 sorties, attacking British tanks at Arras. The first and last attempt by the allies pressed to the sea

ty to connect with the main forces of the French army ended in failure.

In this battle, the British demonstrated undoubted personal courage and perseverance in achieving the goal, but at the same time they clearly lacked tactical literacy, inconsistency in actions and inability to navigate the terrain. They were constantly let down by poor communications, which made it difficult to establish interaction between units and individual tanks, not to mention units of other military branches. Because of this, at the very beginning of the battle there was a skirmish between the British and French tanks. There was no mention of any air support. Tank commanders were often forced to lean out of hatches or even dismount and, under enemy fire, signal with gestures from the neighboring tanks. However, even such not entirely skillful actions caused the Germans a lot of trouble and had far-reaching consequences, which we will dwell on later.

On May 19, the commander of the British Expeditionary Corps, General Gort, reported to London that his troops had only a four-day supply of food, and only enough ammunition for one battle [299]. In that

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On the very same day, 68-year-old Gamelin was replaced as Commander-in-Chief of the Allied Forces by 73-year-old General M. Weygand, who retired 5 years ago from the post of Chief of the General Staff of the French Army. Before him was the task, first of all, to save the forces cut off in Belgium. There was very little time left for this, because without replenishment their material resources were rapidly drying up. In the situation that had developed, the only acceptable solution was to launch counter-attacks on the enemy grouping that had broken through. But the first thing Weygand did was cancel the orders of his predecessor. Instead of issuing his orders, he flew to the front to personally talk with the army commanders about the situation. But at that time, the width of the German corridor separating the encircled troops from the main forces of the French did not exceed 40 km, while the Wehrmacht infantry had not yet had time to pull up there.

Only on May 22 did Weygand give his first order, which, in essence, differed little from the Gamelin plan he had canceled earlier. Three days were lost completely uselessly, and during this time the Germans managed to greatly strengthen their positions. Powerful attacks from two sides on the base of the corridor had a good chance of cutting off the German tank divisions located there and in one fell swoop turning the approaching heavy defeat into a brilliant victory. The French counter-offensive was originally scheduled for 23 May, but it was postponed the next day, then postponed for another 2-3 days, and in the end simply canceled. Only Cambrai on May 22 nevertheless took place a local counterattack by the forces of two French tank battalions with the support of

hot regiment. It was repulsed mainly by the forces of the Luftwaffe. Thus, over a million allied soldiers and officers, locked in a cauldron, hung a terrible threat of death or captivity.

In the meantime, Guderian intended to deprive the Allies of the main ports they could use to receive aid or evacuate to England. He aimed his 1st TD at Calais, his 2nd at Boulogne, and his 10th at Dunkirk. At that time, the bulk of the encircled allied troops were located a hundred kilometers from the coast and were connected by battles with the German GA "B". The ports themselves defended only not

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significant garrisons. However, the German tanks were stopped, and not by the enemy, but by their own command. The tactically unsuccessful English attack at Arras had far-reaching operational consequences. She sowed real panic not in the ranks of the German soldiers and officers who fell under her, but among the highest echelon of the Wehrmacht command, including Hitler himself. It should be noted that Rommel himself made a considerable contribution to this confusion. In the heat of battle, he reported to the top about the hundreds of enemy tanks attacking him, and estimated the total strength of his enemy as five divisions. The German leadership, having received an exaggerated idea of the forces of the British at Arras, decided first of all to completely protect their troops from this imaginary threat.

For this reason, on May 21, the German offensive was completely halted for a whole day. Then, to continue it, they were allowed to use only half of the forces, and the 10th TD was withdrawn from the battle and taken to the von Kleist reserve. Reinhardt's 41st Corps, which had only 50 km to go to Dunkirk, was urgently sent to Arras, although the British themselves had already begun to retreat from it to the north. When Guderian's tanks broke into Boulogne on May 22, they had to fight stubborn street battles for three days with reinforcements that had managed to arrive there. For Calais, the Germans needed to fight even longer - for four whole days. So expensive they cost only one missed day of the offensive.

On May 24, the only major port on the sea coast, Dune Kerk, remained in the hands of the troops surrounded in Belgium. The Germans were only 50 km from it, and the Ihavanguards had already crossed the last natural barrier on the way to it - the Aa River. Between them and Dunkirk, the Allies had no forces. The French command believed that it was necessary to tie down German troops in the area for as long as possible in order to buy time to create a solid defense on the rivers Enai and Somme. The commander of the British Expeditionary Force received another task - to save his troops by evacuating them to England. As early as May 19, the British Admiralty gave the order to start developing a plan for the evacuation of British troops from Dunkirk.

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German tanks were getting ready to cross the river. Somme

At this critical moment, the German tanks again completely unexpectedly stopped, as if by magic. This episode subsequently received the title of "Dunkirk miracle". Heated debate about its true causes has not subsided so far. It is interesting that the overwhelming majority of those who dispute the decision to stop a successful offensive literally a few hours away from Dunkirk ascribes to Hitler himself. The discussions themselves are devoted mainly to clarifying the motives for his, to put it mildly, illogical decision. And meanwhile, in fact, it was not the Fuehrer who gave the original order to stop.

Without exception, all German mobile formations - ten armored and six motorized divisions - were subordinate at that moment to the commander of the 4th Army, von Kluge. The leadership of such a mass of mobile troops, and even with such skittish commanders as Guderian and Rommel, became a great burden for this general. Von Kluge was too cautious, therefore, having received a report from von Kleist about 50 percent losses in tanks! and advising

' Within the next five days, the number of combat-ready tanks could be increased to 70% of the state [300].

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Sitting with his superior, von Rundstedt, he issued an order on the evening of May 23, according to which only the 2nd and 8th army corps, consisting exclusively of infantry and operating east of Arras, were allowed to continue the offensive the next day. The tank groups of von Kleist and Hoth were to stop and prepare for further action a day later, on May 25th. Without exception, the commanders of panzer divisions and motorized corps ardently objected to an unjustified stop, but were forced to obey a strict order.

On May 23, the Commander-in-Chief of the Ground Forces von Brauchitsch ordered that the 4th Army be transferred from GA "A" to GA "B". The logic in this decision, of course, was: all the forces intended for the destruction of the allied forces surrounded in Belgium were concentrated in the hands of von Bock, and von Rundstedt was entrusted with the preparation of the subsequent operation to defeat the rest of the French army. Moreover, from the beginning of the campaign, GA "B" decreased from 29 to 21 divisions, while GA "A", on the contrary, swelled from 45 to 71 and became difficult to control. Von Rundstedt, of course, was very offended that he

at once they are deprived of all mobile units and left with one infantry. When Hitler visited his headquarters at 11:30 the next day, he immediately complained to him about von Brauchich. The Führer did not like at all that such an important decision was made without his consent. Annoyed by such self-will of the Commander-in-Chief of the Ground Forces, he immediately canceled his order, convincingly demonstrating to the entire military elite "who is the boss in the house." Moreover, Hitler agreed with the pessimistic assessment of the situation, which von Rundstedt reported to him, and authorized the appearance of the famous "stop order":

"The Führer ordered to continue the offensive east of Arras with the forces of the 8th and 2nd Army Corps, in cooperation with the left wing of Army Group B, in a northwesterly direction. Northwest of Arras, do not advance further than the general line of Lahn, Bethune, Eure, Saint-Omer, Gravelines (channel line). On the contrary, the task of the troops of the western wing is to deploy all mobile forces and force the enemy to break up on the named defensive line that is advantageous for us" [301].

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At the same time, Hitler left the final choice of the method and time of the actions of the 4th Army with all its mobile formations to von Rundstedt. The "Stop Order" was immediately subjected to fierce criticism at all levels of the Wehrmacht command. He was supported only by von Rundstedt and von Kluge with their staffs, as well as by the leadership of the OKW and Goering. Almost all other officers and generals were against it. And no wonder, because according to this order, the infantry of the GA "B" had to go 75 km to Dunkirk, overcoming the stubborn organized resistance of the close-knit front of the allied troops in front of it. And at the same time, the tank divisions of the GA "A", bypassing the enemy from the rear and being close to the practically defenseless port, were doomed to complete inactivity. Moreover, they had to evacuate the bridgeheads captured earlier on the eastern bank of the Aa River, i.e. retreat unnecessarily. Von Brauchitsch's attempts to persuade Hitler to change his mind ended in failure.

In this critical situation, even the vaunted German discipline cracked. On May 24, having disobeyed Hitler, Halder, by his power, transmitted over the radio to the headquarters of GA "A" the decision to attack. This was not an order, the calculation was made on the independence and initiative of the tank commanders, proven more than once. However, this desperate attempt came to nothing, since von Rundstedt, in turn, did not obey the OKH and forbade the radio message to be delivered to the Fourth Army subordinate to him. It was only on the morning of May 26 that he hesitated and went to the front to discuss the situation with von Kluge and Goth. Only after their persistent persuasion, von Rundstaedt, with the consent of Hitler, finally canceled the "stop order" from 13.30 on the same day. But the tank divisions could not go forward immediately, because during the forced

idle tankers were engaged in the repair of equipment and putting themselves in order. Finally, at 8 am on May 27, the Germans resumed their offensive. On May 29, the dimensions of the cauldron decreased to 45 km in length and 30 km in width [302]. It seemed that it was about to slam shut, but it wasn't there, the Allies made full use of the three days of respite kindly presented to them. They managed to pull up troops, organized defense, equipped positions, radically changing the situation

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at the front in their favor. German attacks ran into the solid defenses of several divisions and choked.

Meanwhile, the evacuation was in full swing on the coast. It began on May 19, and in the first week almost 28 thousand people were evacuated from Dunkirk, Boulogne and Calais to England. After the loss of Boulogne and Calais, the British threw everything that was at hand to save their soldiers in the last port they held. They called the operation to withdraw troops from the pocket "Dynamo" and began around 7 pm on May 26. Initially, it did not unfold very successfully; by May 28, only 9965 people were able to be taken out. But the pace of evacuation increased rapidly: on May 29, 47,310 people were already taken out, and on May 31, 68,014. By that time, 861 units of a wide variety of watercraft were involved in the operation, from warships to purely civilian vessels, such as yachts, pleasure boats, fishing boats and even river barges. They were covered by a flotilla of 56 destroyers and torpedo boats, led by a cruiser. Opposing the evacuation, the Germans sank 272 boats, including 13 destroyers.

Nevertheless, from May 26 to June 4, 338,682 people managed to evacuate to England. In addition to them, from other French ports during the same time it was possible to take out about 4 thousand Englishmen. Thus, over the entire period of the evacuation, over 370 thousand people were literally torn from German hands. It was not only the British who were taken out, about a third of those rescued were French. However, 115 thousand French soldiers and officers, many of whom covered the evacuation until the last minute, were taken prisoner. On May 28, the Belgian army, reduced in numbers to half a million, capitulated along with their entire country. The exact number of encircled Allied soldiers who died during this most difficult time is now hardly possible to establish. In the chaos of retreat and feverish boarding of ships and vessels, there was no time for calculations ...

Save people first. For the evacuation of equipment there was no place on the decks, no time for loading, so the Germans got huge trophies. The British Expeditionary Force alone abandoned 63 thousand cars, 20 thousand motorcycles, 475 tanks and armored vehicles on the continent,

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2400 guns and whole mountains of small arms, equipment and ammunition [303].

Operation "Dynamo" was carried out in the conditions of active operations of German aviation. Its commander-in-chief [ering] promised Hitler that with the forces of the Luftwaffe alone he would be able to prevent the evacuation of the encircled Allied troops and force them to capitulate. But Goering clearly overestimated his capabilities. There were several reasons for this. First of all, the Luftwaffe was objectively not ready to solve such a large-scale and responsible task. It could not concentrate all its forces on it, because no one removed from it the responsibility for supporting the ground forces in other sectors of the front. The air units have only begun to relocate to the recently captured Belgian airfields. Most of the German aircraft were still stationed in Germany, very far from Dunkirk. For example, fighters had only enough fuel for a few minutes of action directly above the target. In addition, during the first 15 days of intense hostilities, the ranks of the backlash waffe noticeably thinned out. 810 German aircraft were lost forever, and another 195 were badly damaged [304]. The crews were also badly exhausted by continuous fighting and needed a break.

In addition, nature itself seemed to take the side of the allies at that time. While the sea was calm, the fine weather, which had been unfailing during the first two weeks of the campaign, finally broke. Of the nine days spent on Operation Dynamo, only 2.5 were completely favorable for air operations. Two more days were completely non-flying, and the rest of the time the weather more or less prevented flights. In addition, heavy rains soaked the soil through with moisture and made it difficult for tanks to pass.

But the main factor that did not allow the Luftwaffe to disrupt the evacuation of the Allies was the energetic actions of fighters from the British air defense system. Dunkirk was only 50 km away. This allowed the British to make several sorties during the day. In total, in order to cover their troops and ships, British aviation carried out

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2739 sorties. Another unpleasant surprise for the Germans was the first appearance over Dunkirk of the British Spitfires, one of the best fighters of World War II. Over 500 British bombers also made a significant contribution to the common cause. Quite unexpectedly for themselves, the Germans for the first time lost air superiority over the battlefield and suffered significant losses. In seven flying days, 174 German bombers and fighters were lost on the entire Western Front,

most of whom died in the Dunkirk area [305].

The successful evacuation from Dunkirk was the first and long-awaited good news of success for the British after a long series of stunning setbacks and defeats. But it was far more important than a purely moral victory. More than 200,000 well-trained soldiers and officers of the land army of England were saved from death and captivity. There was no noticeable number of soldiers and army reserve officers in the country, because in peacetime there was no military service. In the event that the evacuation failed, the prospects for a further continuation of the war with a seemingly invincible Germany became more than gloomy. It is possible that in such a situation, the Churchill government, ready to fight the Nazis to the end, would have to resign, and England would have withdrawn from the war, making peace with Hitler.

It is not difficult to imagine what this would mean for the USSR. Wehrmacht would have been able to bring about 40 extra divisions to Operation Barba Rossa, of which four were tank divisions. This would allow the Germans to form a full-fledged fifth tank group there. The strength of the Luftwaffe would grow by the thousands of aircraft and crew members involved and lost in the West. Yes, and the military equipment in the German ground forces would become significantly larger due to the use of material resources, which would no longer need to be diverted to the construction of the fleet. This is not to mention the fact that in the absence of an English naval blockade, Germany would have received unhindered access to much more significant stocks of vital raw materials and strategic materials. And for the United States, the possibility of intervening in the development of events in Europe without

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English assistance would be extremely difficult. The authors of this book are not fans of alternative history, so we will not discuss here the various scenarios for the development of events that are possible in this alignment of forces. But one thing is certain: in a duel with Germany, without England on its side, the Soviet people would have had a much harder time, and they would undoubtedly have suffered more losses.

heavy.

As soon as the Wehrmacht's panzer divisions reached the English Channel, the OKW began preparations for a second strategic operation, codenamed "Rot", with the aim of finally defeating France. It clearly underestimated the possibility of a quick evacuation of the Allied troops. Hitler counted on an agreement with England. Halder wrote in his diary on May 21: "<...> the main enemy <...> for us is France. We are looking for contact with England <...>" [306].

We will not describe in detail the course of hostilities at this stage. Let us only emphasize that mobile troops again played a decisive role in the defeat of the French army.



Germans. On May 28, Hitler decided to create a new tank group consisting of the 39th and 41st MK. Guderian was appointed its commander. Von Kleist's tank group included the 14th and 16th MKs [307]. Under the command of Goth, only his former 15th MK remained.

The troops of GA "B", which launched an offensive on June 5, at first met with stubborn resistance from the enemy. After the confusion of the first week of the war, the French managed to recover and changed their defensive methods. They began to echelon battle formations in depth and create strongholds along the main highways, equipped for all-round defense. However, the Germans quickly found an antidote to such tactics. Rommel excelled in this. His 7th TD, after breaking through the front, launched a further offensive along peripheral roads, bypassing wide highways, villages and hills. On June 17 alone, she passed 240 km through the French rear without encountering any resistance. On June 9, Guderian's tank group entered the gap made by the infantry. "Swift Heinz" again lived up to his nickname. In just a week, his tanks managed to overcome about 500 km with battles.

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from Château Porciennes on the River Aisne in the Ardennes to Pontarlier at the Swiss border. Thus, the French 2nd GA, consisting of the 3rd, 4th and 5th armies, defending the Maginot Line between Sedan and Switzerland, was bypassed and cut off. She had to fight with an inverted front.

Italy also decided to grab her share of the French pie and on June 10 declared war on France. On the same day, the French government evacuated to Bordeaux and declared Paris an "open city". On June 14, troops of the German 18th Army entered the country's capital without resistance. On June 15, the German 7th Army from the GA "Ts" crossed the Rhine near Breisach. Moreover, she managed to break through the Maginot Line there. By that time, the garrisons of its fortifications and the troops supporting them were significantly weakened, because a significant part of them had to be removed from the front line and sent to fight the tankers who threatened them from the rear [uderian. On June 19, the infantry of GA "C" von Leeb met with the tanks of GA "A" von Rundstedt at Le Chapelle, not far from Belfort. About half a million French soldiers and officers were locked in another giant cauldron in Lorraine, and it was already impossible to get out of there.

In these desperate conditions, the French decided that further resistance was hopeless, and on June 17 they proposed to the Germans that they begin negotiations for an armistice. It was signed on June 22, 1940 in the Compiègne Forest, 65 km northeast of Paris, in the very famous carriage of the French marshal F. Foch, in which on November 11, 1918, Germany concluded the Compiègne truce with the Entente. So the vindictive Hitler celebrated the fulfillment of his long-standing dream of revenge for the defeat in the First World War.

France signed an armistice with Italy in Rome two days after Compiègne. According to this act, the campaign in the West finally ended at 01.35 on June 25.

We can summarize its main results. The German army lost 48,185 people in it killed, 968 missing and about 111 thousand wounded. Irrecoverable losses amounted to 839 tanks and 1236 aircraft. The French army only lost 120 thousand people killed, the Belgian - 7500, and the Dutch - 3000. The losses of the British army and aviation amounted to 5000 killed, and in total - about 70 thousand,

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including those who fell into German captivity. The French lost 892, and the British 1029 aircraft [308].

The roots of the French defeat, oddly enough, lie in the difficult and bloody victory in the First World War. France then paid dearly for its victory: one and a half million of its soldiers and officers were killed or went missing. The country has thus lost over a quarter of its male population between the ages of 18 and 27. These monstrous losses forced the French to think about how to prevent them in the future, especially since France was almost twice inferior in the number of citizens to its probable enemy - Germany. The French and British military leadership failed to see the new trends in the development of new methods of warfare. They blindly believed in the inviolability of the experience of the First World War. In their military plans, the Allies proceeded from the fact that the powerful fortifications of the "Maginot Line" would not allow the Germans to take active steps, and thus the war, as in 1914, would take on a protracted character. The outcome of the battles then was decided mainly by the amount of human and material resources that the belligerents had at their disposal. The speed of the commanders' actions, their independence, activity and ability to maneuver did not play a special role. The error of the French command, which was responsible for the strategic planning of the military operations of the coalition troops, was that it had too many hopes for a defense based on stationary fortifications, and was completely insufficiently prepared for a maneuver war. His views on strategy and tactics were hopelessly stuck in the narrow confines of the grandiose battles that took place on the Western Front in 1914-1918. The wait-and-see nature of the Allied strategy gave strategic initiative to the Germans in advance, who themselves determined the time and direction of the strikes. The French army was completely unprepared for another type of war - "blitzkrieg" - which the Germans immediately imposed on them. With the beginning of active operations, the allied command, unable to timely reveal the direction of the main German attack, hesitantly led its troops in the difficult situation that had arisen. In conditions of unstable communication,

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the decisions made were brought to the attention of the troops with great delay. Numerous Allied aviation failed to stop the German tank columns when they crossed the Ardennes. Tanks were used ineptly and, as a rule, scattered. The clash of armies, which in terms of the conduct of hostilities, in essence, was separated by a whole era, and could not end otherwise than in the crushing defeat of the Anglo-French troops.

The difference between the German and French approaches to command and control of combat operations was most clearly manifested in the organization of communications. It is hard to imagine, but in the headquarters of Hamelin, located in the dungeon of the Chateau de Vincennes southeast of Paris, there was not a single radio station! Even teletypes - and those were absent. In order to contact the commander of the 1st GA, who occupied positions in the northeast, General Georges, Gamelin usually went to his headquarters by car. A 60 km long journey usually took three hours round trip, but no one counted the time spent. Due to unreliable telephone communication, orders to the front were often delivered by motorcyclists, but on roads clogged with troops and refugees, they often got into accidents. On average, Gamelin's orders reached the front line units for which they were intended in two days, and by that time they were hopelessly outdated. Weygan, who replaced Gamelin, moved his headquarters to the remote castle of Breezer, where communication conditions were much worse than even in Vincennes. A single telephone was installed there, connected to an ordinary civilian communication line. Every day for two hours in the afternoon, the commander-in-chief of the allied forces, together with his headquarters, remained completely cut off from the outside world at the very height of the war. The reason for this unheard of disgrace was surprisingly simple: a telephonist girl who served a manual switchboard in a small neighboring town was leaving for lunch ...

At the same time, communications were given the most serious attention in Germany. This was especially true of radio communications, without which successful maneuverable combat operations are inconceivable. In terms of the number of trained radio operators, the Wehrmacht surpassed the French army by 12 times! It is not surprising that headquarters

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von Kleist's tank group, keeping up with his troops, changed his location 34 times in 46 days of the campaign in the West, maintaining continuous communication with subordinate headquarters and commanders. The German command, down to the divisional and even corps level, received command tanks and armored vehicles well equipped with powerful radio stations. Tank commanders, observing the course of the battle, could directly control the subunits and units participating in it, timely

by maneuvering with their own forces and means. In contrast to them, the French, acting strictly according to the charter, equipped their command posts far in the rear, beyond the reach of enemy artillery fire. Not surprisingly, they were constantly late in responding to the ever-changing environment.

Aviation also had its say in the campaign in the West. Before it began, the Luftwaffe had 69% more aircraft than the Allies. This, no doubt, immediately gave the Germans a significant advantage in the air, but thanks to skillful organization, they immediately turned it into an overwhelming one. In terms of the average number of combat-ready aircraft, the German aviation was already three times superior to its opponents, and in terms of the number of sorties made, 12 times! If the French fighters, on average, made no more than one sortie per day of the campaign, then the German ones did about four. Having invested all their strength in the first strike, the Germans immediately seized air supremacy, although they suffered significant losses. Only on May 10, 1940, 347 of their aircraft were shot down, of which 170 were transport aircraft used for landings [309]. The Allies, on the other hand, acted just the opposite: at first they held their planes, trying to save them for future long battles. As it turned out, their expectations were not justified, because the war ended in just a month and a half. At the same time, the main forces of the Luftwaffe were focused on direct support of the troops. The average time for aircraft to appear over the battlefield after they were called was only 45 minutes. For the French, it dragged on for long hours and even days because of the endless coordination between different authorities. And the fulfillment of tasks in the immediate interests of the ground forces is considered

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Elk in French aviation is a secondary matter, which is why she treated him accordingly.

In the organization of tank troops and the basic principles of their use, the Wehrmacht also had an undoubted advantage. Without exception, all German tanks became part of 10 tank divisions, which, in turn, were combined into motorized corps, and those into tank groups. Such an extreme concentration of forces allowed the German tank forces to independently successfully solve the most important operational tasks. The French had a quarter more tanks than the Germans, but only slightly more than a third of them were in service with three panzer and three mechanized divisions by the beginning of the campaign. The rest of the French tanks were dispersed along the entire front into small units, the most numerous of which were about 33 separate tank battalions. They were used mainly for direct support of the infantry, they could not significantly affect the course of hostilities and were defeated one by one. Belgian and Dutch tanks were used in exactly the same way, which suffered the same sad fate. English armored division

arrived at the front only at the end of May, and did not have time to gather all her strength into a fist. As a result, she, too, was unable to seriously influence the situation.

The successful actions of the motorized infantry of tank and motorized formations, in essence, were based on the tactics of assault groups, first developed and successfully used by the Germans during the First World War. They deeply comprehended and creatively transferred this experience from the tactical to a higher, now operational level, and the result again turned out to be more than successful. It is no coincidence that former infantry officers with extensive combat experience in commanding assault groups, such as Rommel, mastered it especially quickly and successfully. Advancing along the path of least resistance and bypassing the nodes of resistance, the German infantry, with close support from artillery, as a rule, quickly achieved deep breakthroughs in the enemy defenses.

Then came the turn of the tank troops, which the command of the Wehrmacht boldly and decisively used to

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development of tactical success into operational success. They immediately burst into the gap made for them and, using powerful air support, rushed forward at full speed, not allowing the enemy to come to his senses and restore the torn front. At the same time, the advanced units left the care of the flanks to the second echelons, especially since the issues of interaction in the Wehrmacht were worked out to perfection. Deep and sudden tank raids caused panic in the rear of the enemy, which quickly spread far around. The most combat-ready units, after contact with disorderly crowds of alarmists, often lost their self-control and themselves joined the fugitives, replenishing their ranks. At the same time, the allied command from everywhere received immoderately exaggerated information about the forces and successes of the Germans and, therefore, was not able to correctly orient itself in a difficult situation and take adequate countermeasures. Under such conditions, it quickly lost the will to win. Even the Germans themselves did not expect such an effect. It many times exceeded the direct physical damage caused by tanks that had broken through. The ultimate goal of the German mobile troops after they entered the operational space was not the capture of territory, but the encirclement of large masses of enemy troops. Numerous divisions, corps and even armies, squeezed into cramped "boilers" and deprived of supplies, quickly dispersed, died or were captured. The war was won not by a long gradual depletion of the resources of enemy countries, but by the swift crushing of their armed forces. And so swift that there was no time left for their recovery. This was the classic "blitzkrieg". Such effective, quick and flexible methods of warfare left no chance of success for the Allies, who at first professed the old linear tactics.

with its planned, methodical and unhurried development of the situation. Faced with a completely unexpected turn of events, they were stunned, depressed and did not immediately recover. They made their undoubted contribution to the defeat and the widespread tank fear in their troops, and sensitivity to detours and coverage. The fruitful idea of "sickle strike", found by Manstein, and then developed

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planned and carried out by the German command, together with gross errors in the operational plan of Gamelin, further increased the scale and speed of the catastrophe of the Union NIKOV.

The shortcomings of the obviously outdated system of training of the allied forces and, first of all, their command cadres, manifested themselves especially clearly. Unlike the German one, it did not give any room for initiative and independence. Accustomed to fight strictly according to regulations and commands from above, French and British soldiers and officers were especially discouraged when they found themselves in unusual conditions for themselves, when to hesitate in the face of the enemy in anticipation of orders from their superiors was tantamount to defeat. The Germans, having developed new tactics and new operational principles for the use of mobile troops, tested them in practice during the Polish campaign and, based on its results, made the necessary adjustments to them. Therefore, they felt themselves in a highly maneuverable war, like a fish in water. Unlike them, the allies had to comprehend, study and master everything on the go. They did not have the time, the territory, or the resources to do this. The only real chance for the French to continue the war was evacuation to North Africa. But for this, their leadership did not have enough political will, and it preferred to capitulate.

The victory in the West in 1940 was the pinnacle of Hitler's strategic success. After it, he felt himself omnipotent. But the attempt to repeat the blitzkrieg in the East failed miserably. With this, the decline of the Third Reich began.

Chapter 4

RED ARMY IN MILITARY CONFLICTS  
In 1939-1940.

WAR WITH FINLAND

In the prewar years, good relations developed between the USSR and Finland, much better than with other countries with which it bordered in the West. It is no coincidence that in the book Future War, written in 1928,

fell:

"Both ethnographically, economically and historically, Finland has every right to an independent existence, not disputed in any way by the Soviet Union. <...> Therefore, from the side of the Sov. The Union of Finland cannot expect aggressiveness that threatens its existence. Nevertheless, Finland was still suspected of hostile intentions, as, indeed, were the rest of the neighboring countries.

In general, despite the absence of deep mutual contradictions between Finland and the USSR, the international situation, economic dependence on foreign (Anglo-American) capital and fear of a growing USSR are pushing Finland into the camp of our enemies. Finland must therefore be regarded as a quite probable adversary of the USSR in the event of a collision with the Polish-Baltic alliance" [310].

In fact, in the pre-war years, Finland firmly adhered to a policy of neutrality, consistently rejecting all attempts to persuade her to join any military bloc. Together with other Scandinavians, the Finns hoped to sit aside from the big war that was brewing in Europe. Contrary to popular belief, relations between Finland and Germany in the late 1930s left much to be desired. For example, in 1938 not

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The German envoy to Helsinki, W. von Blucher, reported to his leadership in Berlin that the idea of German-Finnish friendship leaves a weak mark among the Finns, of whom "more than 40% are socialists and more than 90% are democrats" [311]. In December 1939, the German Foreign Ministry noted with regret that Finland's foreign policy in recent years was based on the idea of neutrality, that it had never defended German interests in the League of Nations, and its population mainly adhered to the economic and ideological orientation towards peocratic England [312].

On the other hand, a noticeable improvement in Soviet-Finnish relations was noted in the operational plan of the Red Army for 1939:

"The possibility of maintaining neutrality by Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Romania, Bulgaria and Turkey is taken into account, the duration and stability of which will depend on the created political situation and the success of the first operations of the Red Army and the RKVMF" [313].

Thus, Finland was officially excluded from the list of probable enemies of the USSR, which were then considered

Germany and Poland were in the West and Japan in the East. However, with the signing of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, the position of the Soviet Union changed dramatically. The first article of the additional secret protocol placed Finland in the sphere of Soviet interests. From that moment on, a threat hung over the independence and sovereignty of the Finns, which they did not even suspect at that time. Stalin decided to take advantage of the moment when the hands of the main European players were bound by the war. The armies of France, England and Germany at that time stood facing each other, ready to engage in mortal combat. But all this happened in the west of Europe. And its east was then undividedly dominated by the huge and mighty Soviet Union, which no one could prevent from pursuing its interests enshrined in the secret additional protocol to the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact. After the successful annexation of Western Ukraine and Western Belarus, the Soviet political and

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the military leadership had no doubt that they would be able to quickly extract any concessions from Finland by simple diplomatic pressure, and if necessary, by military force.

On October 5, 1939, the USSR, using a scenario already worked out in the Baltic states, suggested that Finland send its representatives to Moscow to discuss important political issues. But at the talks that began a week later, the Finnish delegation headed by J. Paasikivi categorically rejected the Soviet proposal to conclude a mutual assistance treaty and allow the establishment of Soviet military bases on its territory. She defended the neutrality of Finland with all her might and did not agree to any agreements that could cast doubt on it. The Finns demonstrated a rare firmness and intransigence. In response to the concentration of Red Army troops on the Karelian Isthmus, they announced a general mobilization in the country and began to evacuate the urban population to the countryside. Then, on October 14, Molotov handed over a memorandum to Paasikivi with the following points:

"1) lease the port of Hanko (Tange) and the area around the port <...> to the Soviet government for a period of 30 years for the construction of a naval base with coastal artillery defense <...>. To protect the naval base, allow the Soviet government to keep one infantry regiment, two anti-aircraft artillery battalions, two aviation regiments, and a tank battalion in the area of the port of Khanko—no more than five thousand men in all;

2) grant the Soviet navy the right to anchorage in Lappvik Bay (Lappohya);

3) transfer to the Soviet Union in exchange for the corresponding Soviet territory the islands of Gogland (Sur-Sari), Seyskari, Lavansaari, Tyutorsaari (Small and Large), Björke, and



also part of the Karelian Isthmus <...>, as well as the western part of the Rybachy and Sredny peninsulas - a total of 2761 sq. km - all this according to the attached map;

4) in compensation for the territory ceded to the Soviet Union under paragraph 3, transfer to the Republic of Finland the Soviet territory in the area of Rebola and Porosozero in the amount of 5523 square meters. km according to the attached map;

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5) to strengthen the existing non-aggression pact between the Soviet Union and Finland by including a clause on mutual obligations not to join groupings and coalitions of states directly or indirectly hostile to one or another contracting party;

6) to disarm the mutually fortified areas on the Karelian Isthmus, along the Finnish-Soviet border, leaving the usual border guards on this border;

7) not to object to the arming of the Åland Islands by the national forces of Finland itself, so that it has nothing to do with the arming of the Åland. any foreign state, including the Swedish state" [314].

The Finnish delegation did not have the authority to negotiate such radical issues and immediately left for Helsinki to discuss them. Negotiations resumed on October 23, but did not lead to a mutual agreement. The Finns were ready to transfer some islands in the Gulf of Finland to the USSR and move the border on the Karelian Isthmus by 10 km, but categorically objected to the organization of a Soviet military base on the Khanko Peninsula. However, the Soviet Union continued to insist that the border be 70 km from Leningrad instead of 32, which separated it from it [315]. This was motivated by the need to eliminate the purely theoretical threat of shelling this city from long-range guns. Following the same logic, one could demand that the border be moved hundreds of kilometers in order to rule out the possibility of bombing Leningrad from the air, and at the same time deprive Finland of the Baltic coast so that its fleet could not attack the city from the sea. It would be much more profitable to maintain and develop good neighborly relations with Finland, but there was no question of this.

The exchange of the Finnish territory on the Karelian Isthmus for twice the Soviet territory in Eastern Karelia was far from equivalent. The USSR wanted to get a fully equipped territory, where thousands of Finns lived and where vast agricultural lands were located. And in return, only impenetrable forests were offered,

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lakes and swamps. Considering that the Finns could already provide themselves with only 90% of bread, and their ability to purchase food, feed and fertilizer deteriorated sharply in the conditions of the outbreak of the world war, it becomes clear why they defended the Karelian Isthmus with such emphasis.

property.

Further negotiations proceeded intermittently and, despite small mutual concessions, did not give any hope of reaching an agreement that suited both parties. Finally, on November 13, the Finnish delegation finally left Moscow. But even earlier, practical actions began in the USSR to solve the problem by force.

In the summer of 1939, at the Main Military Council of the Red Army, Shaposh

Nikov reported on the plan for the war with Finland, developed at the General Staff under his leadership. In his opinion, victory required large forces and "at least several months of intense and difficult war." Being an educated and experienced military commander, Shaposhnikov knew what he was talking about, especially since in 1935-1937. he commanded the LVO and thoroughly got acquainted with the situation in this peculiar theater of operations. Shaposhnikov was one of Stalin's closest military advisers and enjoyed his

hidden respect. Suffice it to say that of all his inner circle, only the leader called Shaposhnikov by name and patronymic. However, in this case, Stalin did not agree with the opinion of the chief of the General Staff of the Red Army and said: "You require such significant forces and means to resolve the matter with a country like Finland. There is no need for that amount." As a result, Shaposhnikov was removed from planning the war with Finland and sent on a long vacation to the Black Sea until it began [316]. The strategists from Stalin's entourage decided that they could deal with disobedient Finland with small forces and in a short time. They seemed to have every reason to do so.

Indeed, the balance of forces and means did not leave the Finns any hope of resistance. The entire population of Finland in 1939 was 3.7 million people, while only in Leningrad then lived only

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a little less - 3.2 million people. Including the newly annexed Western Ukraine and Belarus, there were 185 million citizens in the Soviet Union, or 50 times more than in Finland! The peacetime Finnish army consisted of only three infantry divisions, a cavalry brigade and several separate battalions with a total strength of 37,000 men [317]. The quality of the trained reserves also left much to be desired, because the service life of a Finnish soldier was less than a year. True, in 1935 the Finns

got along with the system of retraining of reservists, through which by the end of 1939 they managed to pass about 180 thousand lovek.

The material support of the armed forces of Finland was an even sadder spectacle. The main reason was an acute lack of funding. The country was not rich, and its natural and climatic conditions were harsh. The Finns had to earn their living by hard work, and they were by no means willing to spend their GI day on "guns instead of butter." Therefore, they were sorely lacking military equipment and weapons, especially modern ones, for deploying an army in the event of a general mobilization.

A clear example of this is the unenviable condition of the Finnish artillery. The basis of its material part was made up of tools that Finland inherited from the Russian Empire. On the eve of the war, the Finns had 418 field guns in six different calibers and fifteen different systems. Almost half of them were Russian 76-mm guns of the 1902 model (the famous "three-inch"), hopelessly outdated by the end of the 30s. The newest were eight 76-mm guns of the 1922 and 1923 models. Of the heavy field guns, there were only 32 howitzers with a caliber of 150-152 mm of four different systems. In addition, 282 guns were stored in Finnish warehouses, designed mainly as early as 1877 and not even equipped with recoil devices. However, the lack of artillery forced the Finns to use these museum exhibits of the black powder era on the front. Even worse was the ammunition situation. On average, one gun had only 646 shells, which could be enough for about three weeks of intense combat

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actions. Yes, and the available ammunition was manufactured, mainly, even before the revolution and had since then partially rusted. Over a third of them did not break at all [318]. The modest capabilities of the Finnish industry for the production of ammunition far lagged behind the needs of the army in wartime. As a heavy infantry weapon, the entire army had 360 mortars with a reserve of mines for 22 days of fighting.

Things were no better with the materiel of the anti-tank artillery. By the beginning of the war, the Finns managed to acquire 48 37-mm anti-tank guns in Sweden, and another 50 of the same ones were released under license themselves. In addition to them, in Finland there were 14 old Russian trench 37-mm cannons of the 1914 and 1915 model! New 37-mm guns began to enter the troops just before the war, and they simply did not have time to master them properly. The anti-tank artillery personnel training center in Finland was organized only 1.5 months before the start of the war, on October 16, 1939, and managed to produce personnel for staffing only 15 two-gun anti-tank

tank platoons. At the same time, during the training, the cadets were allowed to fire only 4-7 scarce shells per gun, which was clearly not enough for a full-fledged preparation of crews.

Available in Finland since 1919, 34 French Renault ET-17 tanks by the end of the 30s were hopelessly outdated and worn out to the limit. Therefore, some of them were used as stationary firing points in strong points on the Karelian Isthmus. In 1938-1939. 32 Vickers 6-ton tanks were received from England, and another one was bought even earlier, in 1933, for testing and evaluation. In order to save money, the tanks were ordered without weapons, optical instruments and radio equipment. With all this, they were supposed to be equipped with their own forces over time. The increased threat of war forced the Finns to hurry.

" These guns could penetrate approximately 10 mm of armor at a right angle at a distance of 200 m, yielding in this respect even to a rifle armor-piercing bullet.

\* This tank at one time became the prototype for the most massive pre-war Soviet tank T-26.

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They tried to buy optics in Germany, but the Germans refused, and they had to be bought in England. In February 1939, 37-mm guns for arming tanks were ordered from the Finnish state gun factory UTT, but the development of guns under the license of the Swedish company Bofors proceeded unacceptably slowly. As a result, by the end of 1939, only 10 tanks were ready for combat, and even those without any radio equipment and even without an internal intercom [319].

The Finnish Air Force was armed with 117 combat aircraft of eight different types: 46 fighters, 17 bombers and 54 reconnaissance aircraft [320]. Of these, only 17 British-made Bristol "Blenheim" Mk. bombers were modern, but Finnish bombs were not placed in their bomb bays, and their walkie-talkies were not tuned to the standard radio waves of Finnish aviation. The air defense was armed with 38 76-mm, 53 40-mm and 34 20-mm anti-aircraft guns. They had only 10 gun-guidance stations, 18 rangefinders, 8 sound pickups, 28 searchlights. 14 | rifle-caliber machine gun. In the summer of 1939, the Finns ordered 134 20-mm anti-aircraft guns from Germany, but managed to receive only 50 of them. When the war began, the Germans imposed an arms embargo on Finland, and the remaining 84 guns were sent there only after the end of hostilities.

The list of shortages in armaments and equipment of the Finnish army on the eve of the war can be continued for a long time. Yes what

here to speak, if after mobilization the Finns lacked the regular number of 75% of pistols, 15% of rifles, 70% of machine guns, 10% of light and 40% of heavy machine guns (and this is taking into account the transfer of weapons from paramilitary organizations to the army). They were provided with cartridges for only 2.5 months of the war. Even uniforms in Finland were only enough for 80% of recruits.

The Finnish government placed its main hopes in protecting the country's independence from its eastern neighbor on the system of long-term fortifications on the Karelian Isthmus, which became known as the Mannerheim Line. The line got

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name in honor of General K. Mannerheim', on whose initiative it began to be erected immediately after Finland gained independence in 1918. Fortifications on the Karelian Isthmus were erected in several stages. In 1920-1921 the so-called. "Enckel line", which included 168 permanent structures. 110 of them were single embrasure machine gun pillboxes, two were double embrasure machine gun pillboxes, and eight were gun casemates. Only one pillbox had combined weapons. The rest of the buildings were not armed at all and were shelters and command posts. In 1923-1924. five small forts were added to them to protect the sea coast in the Vuoksi-Suvanto region. They were equipped with machine guns and 34 57 mm cannons. The "Enkel Line" consisted of 18 defense nodes in the main lane, and another 10 were located in the rear. A few pillboxes cemented the defensive line, which consisted mainly of ordinary field fortifications. The gaps between the nodes of defense reached 6-8 km. The pillboxes themselves were not designed and built in the best way. Their embrasures were adapted for conducting only frontal fire, without providing mutual fire cover, and were relatively easily vulnerable to direct fire from enemy artillery. The quality of their concrete and reinforcement, due to cost savings, also left much to be desired, so they often could not withstand the successful hit of even one heavy projectile [321].

From 1932 to 1934, an additional defense center was built on the right coastal flank of the main defensive line, which included six pillboxes armed with 2-3 machine guns. These structures were superior to their predecessors.

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Mannerheim Carl Gustav (06/04/1867 - 01/28/1951) - Finnish Russian military and statesman, lieutenant general of the Russian imperial army (04/25/1917), in the First World War he commanded a cavalry corps at the front. 05/19/1933 received the rank of field marshal. Soberly assessing the combat capabilities of the Finnish army, he proposed, during negotiations with the Russians, to accept their demands and give part

their territory, receiving at least some compensation for this. But when the cannons thundered, he immediately offered his services to his homeland and was appointed to the post of commander in chief.

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they were used both in concrete strength and as reinforcement, but, more importantly, they had loopholes for flanking fire, protected by side walls or vertical armor plates 100-150 mm thick. Each of these bunkers had its own well with drinking water and living quarters heated by a stove for a garrison of 12-24 people. In 1937, one more powerful machine-gun bunker with three combat casemates was added to them. The barracks for his garrison was located on the lower level, under the casemates [322]. A

In the second half of the 30s. the air of Europe distinctly smelled of gunpowder. In response to this, in August 1936, large-scale work was launched in Finland to further strengthen the Karelian Isthmus. Five old defense centers were radically redesigned: strong combat casemates were added to the pillboxes for flanking fire, and some of them were disarmed and turned into shelters. Instead of them, since 1937, new modern reinforced concrete firing points were erected, which provided a significant leap in the quality of Finnish fortifications. We are talking about the so-called "millionth" bunkers, which received this name because of their high price, reaching millions of Finnish marks. They consisted mainly of 2-3 combat casemates located at a distance of 30-40 m from each other and connected by a barracks for a garrison of 24-58 soldiers. Their embrasures were protected by packages of 3-5, and sometimes even seven armor plates 60-70 mm thick and were invulnerable even to a direct hit by a 152-mm projectile. Some of them were equipped with armored towers designed for a circular view of the terrain, up to 180 mm thick. From above, the "million pillboxes" were covered with a three-meter stone pillow to protect against mounted artillery fire and aerial bombs. Nevertheless, even these best Finnish fortifications were much inferior in size to their counterparts from other countries. Only two of them were two-story. The Finns failed to complete everything planned before the start of the Winter War, there was not enough time for this. On October 9, 1939, they immediately began building 40 bunkers, designed taking into account the Belgian experience

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fortifications, but only 23 of them managed to enter service by the beginning of the "Winter War" [323].

The main defensive strip of the "Mannerheim Line" stretched for 135 km from Ladoga to the Gulf of Finland. It consisted of 22 defense units and included 126 machine-gun

bunkers, of which 74 were old single-loop front-firing bunkers, and 52 were new or modernized bunkers equipped with one to four flanking-fire embrasures. In addition to them, there were seven artillery pillboxes and another machine-gun artillery. The total number of long-term defensive structures of the main strip of the Mannerheim Line, together with reinforced concrete shelters, command posts and concrete infantry positions, reached 189. For comparison, the Soviet Karelian UR, located on the other side of the border, included 196 DOSs on a front of 80 km [ 324]. On the other hand, the foreground of the "Mannerheim Line" had a depth of 16 km on its eastern flank and up to 50 km on its western flank, and KaUR was located on the very border and had practically no foreground. The reinforced concrete structures of the main line of defense of the "Mannerheim Line" were supplemented by 606 bunkers and 804 dugouts. They were connected by 440 km of trenches and communication passages and covered by 136 km of anti-tank obstacles (ditches, scarps and gouges), as well as 330 km of wire obstacles in 3-5 rows of stakes [325].

In the rear of the "Mannerheim Line" was the rear Vyborg position. Its stronghold was only 21 old single embrasure pillboxes of frontal fire, so it was in dire need of further strengthening. Work on its improvement began a few months before the start of the "Winter War", in the early summer of 1939, and continued until the armistice. During this time, it was possible to complete the additional equipment of seven bunkers and 74 bunkers and bring three bunkers and 24 bunkers to the stage of finishing work. Another 182 bunkers and 131 bunkers were just under construction [326].

The long-term defensive structures of the main STRIP of the "Mannerheim Line" and the rear Vyborg position are summarized in Table 4.1:

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Table 4.1

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## STRUCTURES ON THE KARELIAN ISTH

Sections  
of the "Mannerheim Line"

))| Rear and h  
rush position

fortifications

Machine-gun  
pillboxes 2 loopholes"

3—4 embrasures"  
Artillery bunkers"" Total bunkers

Reinforced concrete old shelters  
new old Command  
posts  
new

Concrete Ira infantry  
positions"

Total

Source: [327].

Notes: All new  
、 type; all of the old type.

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HH

Mannerheim himself described the line of fortifications named after him as follows: "Its strength was the result of the steadfastness and courage of our soldiers, and not the result of the fortress of the structures" [328]. A completely fair statement. The strongest side of the Finnish army was



its people, determined to defend their country, regardless of any disparity in power. About a third of the Finnish army consisted of volunteers [329]. Finnish soldiers were well acquainted with the places of future battles, perfectly adapted to the harsh conditions of the terrain and

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climate and skillfully used their features in the fight against a strong enemy. They were especially helped by the unsurpassed ability to ski, which they comprehended from childhood.

If the Soviet proposals were accepted, the "Mannerheim Line" would lose most of its foreground, and its right flank near the city of Koivisto would pass into the hands of the USSR. Thus, Finland at once lost its only "shield" against the Red Army. It is clear that such an option was absolutely unacceptable for the Finns. In response to their intransigence during the negotiations, a broad propaganda campaign was unleashed in the USSR, full of undisguised threats and insults against the leadership of Finland. The Soviet people were persistently told that the Finnish working people were looking forward to the Red Army as their liberator from the oppression of the hated landlords and capitalists, while the Finnish army was suffering from a drop in discipline and was disintegrating before our eyes. Many sincerely believed that the advance into Finland would be like the recently completed campaign into Western Ukraine and Western Belarus.

The Soviet leadership did not doubt another easy success. The plan for the defeat of the Finnish army was instructed to develop the commander of the LVO, commander of the 2nd rank K.A. Meretskov. He was promised additional forces, but no more than two weeks were allotted for the operation. Meretskov, of course, did everything that was required of him. The final version of his plan was reported to Voroshilov on October 29, 1939. According to him:

"After receiving the order to advance, our troops simultaneously invade the territory of Finland in all directions, in order to separate the grouping of enemy forces and, in cooperation with aviation, inflict a decisive defeat on the Finnish army" [330].

The offensive was supposed to be carried out simultaneously in four directions at an average rate of 10-12 km per day. On the main one - on the Karelian Isthmus - it was planned to complete the operation in 8-10 days, and on Vidlitsky

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(Central Finland) - for 15. A month later, these already tight deadlines were reduced: Vyborg was ordered to be taken within four days, and Helsinki - by the end of two weeks [331]. All key points on the territory of Finland lay under occupation. Meretskov did not even forget to issue a special directive "On the norms of personnel behavior" in this country. It appeared on November 29, and its contents were brought to the attention of every fighter and commander. It specifically stated:

"At the exit to the Swedish and Norwegian borders. in no case violate the borders and not allow provocations. Soldiers of the Swedish and Norwegian armies, when meeting at the border, are to be greeted with a salute, without entering into negotiations" [332].

The concentration of units and formations of the Red Army on the Finnish border began in September and accelerated sharply after the final failure of diplomatic negotiations. The composition of the LVO was strengthened, and by the beginning of hostilities included four armies (from right to left): 14th, 9th, 8th and 7th. The balance of forces and means of the parties, which had developed by November 30, are summarized in Table 4.2.

Contrary to common sense, the superiority of the Soviet troops in manpower and equipment in the main direction was less than general. Given the powerful Finnish fortifications, it did not allow hope for a quick victory. Meretskov himself and his troops soon had to be bitterly convinced of this.

On November 17, the command of the LVO received Voroshilov's operational directive No. 0205/op with the requirement "to complete the concentration of the district's troops, in accordance with previously given instructions, and be ready, in cooperation with the Red Banner Baltic and Northern fleets, for a decisive offensive in order to defeat the opposing ground forces and enemy navy" [334]. Based on the directive received, the troops were assigned combat missions. It only remained to indicate the date and time of the start of the offensive.

'All that was needed was a convenient excuse to start a war, the ion was not slow to appear. On November 26, TASS announced that on that day at 15.45, as a result of shelling from the Finnish side from

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Table 4.2

RELATIONSHIP OF FORCES AND MEANS OF THE  
PARTIES TO NOVEMBER 30, 1939

Equivalent  
divisions"

Personnel  
(thousand)

and mortars

Source: [333].

Notes:

\*When calculating the number of equivalent divisions, one brigade was equated to half a division;

“of which the 10th TC, the 52nd SDI, the 34th brigade had not yet finished at that moment

transfer.

The Vet troops, located one kilometer northwest of the village of Mainila, lost four people killed and nine wounded. The accusation was clearly sewn with white thread mi'. Characteristically, “at the headquarters of the 19th rifle corps, parts of which were stationed in the Mainil area, they learned about the incident that day only at 21.00 from the message of the Moscow radio” [335]. But for the leadership of the USSR, the Mainil incident turned out to be very useful. After him, events began to develop with increasing speed. The Soviet side categorically refused to jointly investigate the circumstances of the incident with the Finns, and on November 28, it denounced the non-aggression pact between the two countries. The next day from Finland were officially

Until now, the names and surnames of the victims of the shelling, in which units they served, where the dead are buried, and what is the fate of the wounded, are still unknown.

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all representatives of the Soviet Union were called, and the troops of the Red Army received an order to cross the state border and defeat the Finnish army. At 8:30 am on November 30, 1939, without declaring war on a front stretching over 1,600 km, a Soviet offensive began after a half-hour artillery preparation.

But it did not go at all as smoothly as it was intended by the military and political leadership of the USSR. According to Directive No. 4717 of the commander of the LVO dated November 21, 1939, the operation on the Karelian Isthmus was entrusted to the 7th Army. In the first two days, her troops had to overcome the foreground and reach the Mannerheim Line. Then a three-day pause was provided for, necessary for regrouping and preparing for the assault. Another 4-5 days were allotted to break through the Finnish defense. Then, for the same time,

the task is to reach the Vyborg-Kyakisalmi line. Such a tight schedule was necessary to capture Helsinki by December 21 - the day of Stalin's 60th birthday [336]. But, as usual, once again they "forgot about the ravines", of which there were more than enough on the path of the Soviet troops, and most importantly, they neglected the resistance of the Finns.

It was not long in coming. The Finnish detachments covering the foreground of the "Mannerheim Line" were not numerous, but well trained and motivated. They fought stubbornly and skillfully, with fights in an organized retreat from one defensive position to another, and at the same time repeatedly went over to counterattacks. Leaving, the Finns evacuated the local population, burned villages, blew up bridges, left behind fences and blockages on the roads, as well as various types of obstacles and minefields. And the soldiers of the Red Army Before the offensive were not provided with any means to detect mines. Fortunately, a group of engineers led by Professor N.M. Izyumova from the Military Academy of Communications, on the instructions of the command of the 7th Army, designed a mine detector within one day. By the evening of December 3, 200 of them were made, and they were immediately sent to the troops.

In response, the Finnish government on November 30 declared war on the USSR,

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But the mine detectors by no means solved all the problems, and they could not solve them. As a result, units of the 7th Army moved forward at a rate of 3-7 km per day, or twice as slow as planned. On the right flank, they reached the line of the main defensive line of the Mannerheim Line on December 4, in the center on December 6, and on the left flank only on December 10 (see Diagram 6). But the attempt on December 6 to break through the Finnish defenses on the move failed, despite the powerful artillery preparation, which lasted 3.5 hours and the introduction of 150 tanks into battle. 35 of them were shot down in that battle. This price was paid for advancing only 1-1.5 km [337].

The Finnish fixed defenses were an unpleasant surprise for the units of the Red Army that came across them. But back in 1937, an album was compiled in the USSR, in which there were not only detailed maps of the location of the fortifications of Finland, but even drawings of individual pillboxes and their photographs. With rare exceptions, they accurately reflected reality [338]. Soviet intelligence then worked to the conscience, but this strictly secret document lay on Meretskov's desk, and the troops who stormed the fortifications never reached.

The Red Army suddenly rested its forehead on what seemed to be an insurmountable barrier. But this obstacle was not only and not so much the bunkers of the Mannerheim Line, but their

some defenders. It is significant that in the central section of the Karelian Isthmus between Lake Muolaanyarvi and the Vuoksi water system, the advance stopped 10 km from the main strip of the Mannerheim Line. But the Finns built only field fortifications there. And in all other areas on the line of contact there were a total of only 55 bunkers, of which almost half were obsolete [339]. But they turned out to be enough to stop the Soviet advance on the Karelian Isthmus for almost two months.

The schedule of the offensive was hopelessly frustrated, therefore, as usual, the search for the perpetrators and the displacement of the commanders began. On December 9, Meretskov was appointed commander of the 7th Army instead of V.F. Yakovlev, who became his deputy, and the army itself was reinforced with three additional divisions.

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At the same time, all the troops that fought with Finland were directly subordinated to the Headquarters of the High Command! as part of I.V. Stalin, K.E. Voroshilov, B.M. Shaposhnikova and N.G. Kuznetsov [340].

Having regrouped the troops, Meretskov threw them into another offensive. The artillery preparation before the attack lasted up to four hours, but the fire was carried out mainly on the squares, since the Finnish defense system was not opened. Finnish firing points remained unsuppressed. As a result, in the battles of December 15-17, the Finns managed to stop the advance of three divisions of the 7th Army in the eastern part of the isthmus. The Soviet command tried to turn the tide by bringing large masses of tanks into battle, but even they could not ensure success. The main reason was the inconsistency of the actions of tanks with artillery and infantry. And the infantry itself showed itself far from the best. Sometimes the fighters did not attack at all, but only shouted "Hurrah!", continuing to lie in the snow. Tankers were often forced to go back, leave their combat vehicles and lead the foot soldiers forward by personal example.

On December 19, the 90th and 91st brigades of the 20th brigade, most of whose tank fleet was made up of powerful three-turreted T-28s, managed to penetrate two barriers and completely destroy the Finnish anti-tank battery. The tankers fought their way three kilometers deep into the Finnish defenses, essentially breaking through the Mannerheim Line. But the Finns did not flinch, cut off the infantry from them, pulled up anti-tank guns and began to shoot the tanks that had broken through from the flanks and rear. Grenades and bottles of gasoline went into action. However, the battalions continued to fight stubbornly in the enemy encirclement until darkness, and only then, on the orders of the brigade commander, retreated to their original positions, having lost 29 tanks [342].

On the same day, as part of the 90th TB, two prototypes of double-turreted heavy tanks went on the attack - the SMK and the T-100.

Their strong 60 mm armor proved to be impenetrable to Finnish shells. But the fate of the QMS was decided by a powerful land mine. By-

'  
On January 5, 1940, it was renamed the Headquarters of the Main Military Council [341]. Secrets and lessons of the winter war. 1939-1940. St. Petersburg: Polygon, 2000, p. 258.

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having seized on it, the tank completely failed and was left in the enemy rear, one and a half kilometers from the front line. All attempts to pull out a 55-ton hulk from there ended unsuccessfully. The debut of these experimental machines was considered unsuccessful. On December 18, a baptism of fire took place there. Another newest Soviet heavy tank KV. At the same time, he received nine direct hits from 37-mm armor-piercing shells, but he managed not only to return safely, but also to tow a wrecked T-28 tank from the battlefield to the rear. His worst injury was a dent in the cannon barrel, which had to be replaced. The next morning, the KV was examined by a commission, which included People's Commissar Voroshilov and the head of ABTU Pavlov. In the evening of the same day, by the decision of the USSR Defense Committee No. 443ss, the KV tank was adopted by the Red Army [343].

In the most difficult battles of December 17-21, the Finns managed to repulse the main blow in the Vyborg direction, after which the offensive impulse of the Red Army units on the Karelian Isthmus dried up. The Finns immediately felt this and, encouraged by the success in recent battles, decided to seize the initiative. On December 23, they, with the help of separate units from five infantry divisions, under the leadership of the commander of the 2nd ak, General Enkvist, tried to cut off and destroy the Soviet wedging that was annoying them in the Summa-Leipyasuo area. The operation did not develop very well, most of the Finnish troops remained in their defensive positions. In a major offensive, the Finns showed themselves much worse than in defense. Both their command and troops were not sufficiently prepared for large-scale offensive battles. There was also an acute shortage of shells and the absence of radio stations. The Finns managed to somewhat push back parts of the 70th and 138th rifle divisions, but in the end their counteroffensive failed. Losses were 361 killed, 190 missing and 777 wounded. They were undoubtedly very sensitive, because until that day, from the very beginning of the war, the 2nd ac had lost 857 people killed and missing, as well as 1225 wounded. Reflecting the Finnish attacks, the Red Army, according to official figures, also lost more than a thousand people [344]. After five days of hard fighting

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The 70th SD, with the support of the | th brigade, basically rejected the Fin-

skye troops to their original positions. Attempts by units of the Red Army to break through on the Keksholm and Vyborg directions at the end of December ended in failure. Having learned a hard lesson during the fruitless and bloody assaults, the Soviet leadership finally realized that it was impossible to win with a swoop.

On the evening of December 28, the headquarters of the 7th Army received a telegram from Shaposhnikov:.

"In view of the insufficient preparedness of the 7th Army and not knowing how many pillboxes have been destroyed, if they have been destroyed at all, I propose to postpone the offensive of the 7th Army until further notice [345].

Thus, the Soviet advance on the Karelian Isthmus finally stalled. By that time, the weather had deteriorated sharply: cold weather set in and deep snow fell. It should be noted that, contrary to a widespread misconception, the weather on the Karelian Isthmus was relatively mild until the end of December. Daytime temperatures ranged from +2° to -8°. Only on December 21 did it fall to -15°, but the next day it again became positive. On December 24-26, the temperature again dropped to -25°. However, soon the cold ended, and on December 30 the air even warmed up to +1°. But after the New Year, the real winter finally came, although from January 10 to January 14 it suddenly became warmer again: on these days the thermometer showed from -4 ° to + 3 °. After that, real frosts hit. The record low temperature - -43 ° - was recorded on January 17, and at night it fell to -50 °. However, until the very end of the war, the temperature never again fell below -32°. That winter was the coldest since the winter of 1892/93, but the truly extreme frosts in 1939/40 did not come very often. In Helsinki, the average temperature in December was only -4.4°, in January -12.3°, and in February -13.5° [346].

The weather, of course, added a lot of difficulties to the troops of the Red Army, but it was not the decisive factor in stopping their advance. Personnel at the forefront

' This order also applied to the 13th Army, formed on December 25 on the right wing of the front on the Karelian Isthmus on the basis of V.D. Grendal, who became its commander.

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by that time he was very exhausted and exhausted, and the equipment was in dire need of repair and maintenance. In addition, there was an urgent need to replenish the noticeably depleted combat units to full-time strength and at the same time bring up additional forces. And most importantly, it was necessary to urgently change the tactics of action. Everyone was already convinced that it was impossible to break through the "Mannerheim Line" with massive frontal attacks on the poorly reconnoitered and unsuppressed defenses. Therefore, on the Karelian Isthmus from the end of